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OUR  
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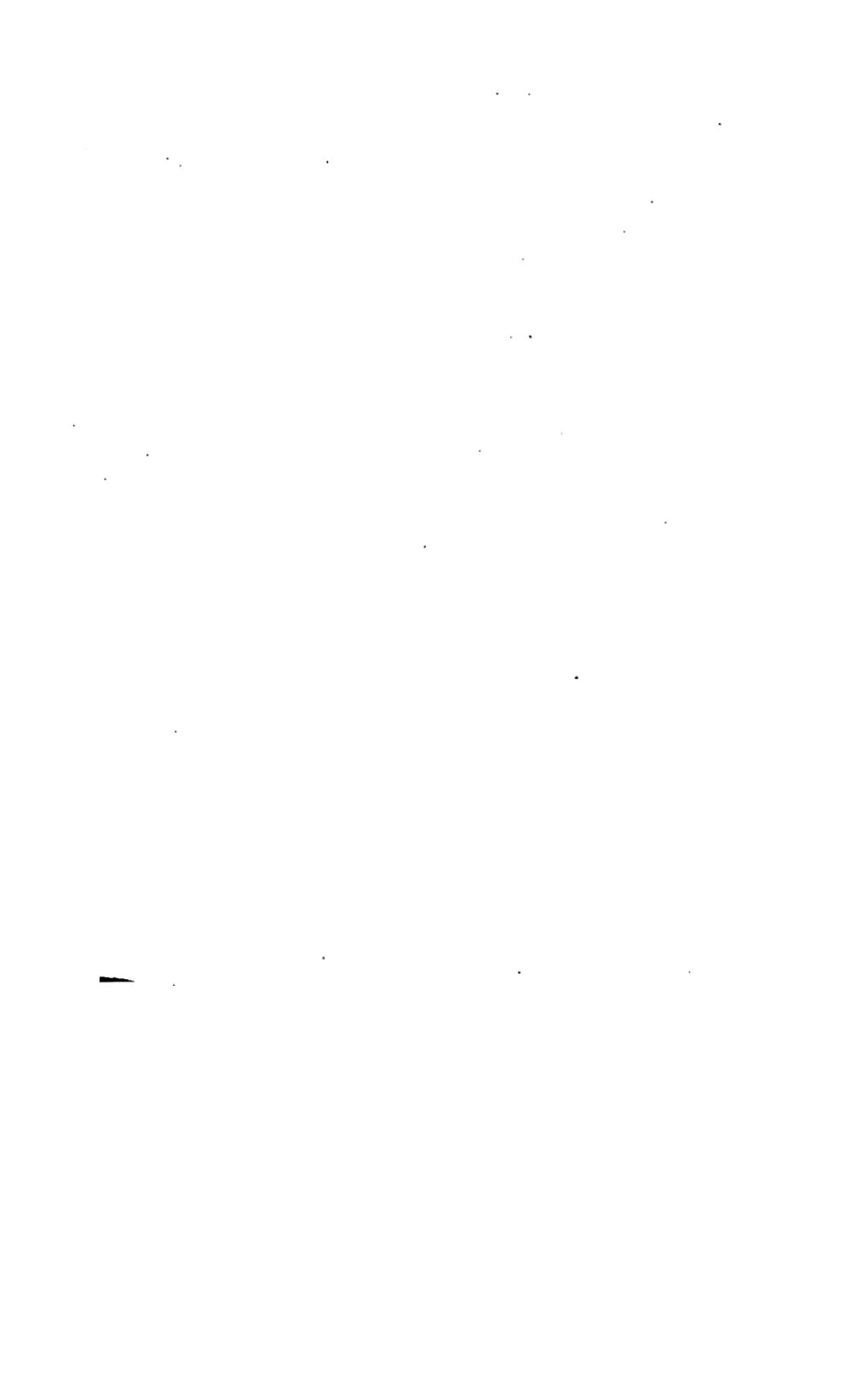








## **OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR.**



# OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR.

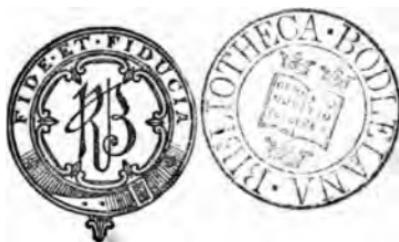
BY

COURTENEY GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE LADY LORRAINE," "A LOSING HAZARD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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## OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR.

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### CHAPTER I.

IT was the Monday after the party, and every one who had been asked to grace the festive gathering at Kirkcudbright with their powers, either for use or for ornament, had departed. Every one had gone; even to the man-cook and the waiters; even to Lord Dalton and Dick, who, dreading the reaction of perfect quiet, took this earliest opportunity of pleading important engagements in London.

brought him a very unpleasant communication. A long-standing creditor must be satisfied, and that by the end of the week, or extreme measures would be resorted to.

The sum was five hundred pounds. Certainly he must go to London and try to raise it somehow. How it was to be done, was not much clearer to him then than it is at this moment to you and me.

One gets sick of writing about this oft-recurring question of money in relating the history of this period in the annals of the Kirkcudbright family. It seems to drag one down into an endless quagmire of sordid speculations, to the suffocation of all that is pure and noble. In the pages of a novel one does at least hope

to be free from such thoughts, and one would like to be amused by ceaseless flights of imagination and a ceaseless flow of jokes. But life, alas ! is not merely a joke, and no veritable history of existence can be written that basks for ever in the sunshine. The shadow, be sure, is close behind.

To Dalton, indeed, the shadow seemed the truer share of existence, though as far as possible he ignored it, and lived his life as bravely as any.

Aches and pains, and the many ills that mortal flesh is heir to, may very bravely be ignored, but still the many bitter pangs they cost us go far, in our summing up at the end, against a very enthusiastic love of life. They cannot be forgotten. And money, alas ! is one of the stings of our higher life, just as pain

or later it sets its claw upon us, and our puny flutterings are vain and fruitless. It docks us of our higher enjoyments sadly.

“We'll dine together at the Rag tonight, Dick,” said Dalton, as they got out of the railway carriage. “Eight—sharp.”

“All right, old fellow. You're off now, I suppose?”

“Yes; I'm just going to barracks for some letters.”

Dalton was in the 2nd Life Guards, and the Regiment was at Hyde Park. Just now he was on leave. He had three weeks more to look forward to.

His main object in going to barracks was to find a friend. Alas!—among the three or four young men whom he found

reading their papers, which they put down with relief, thinking Dalton might have something more interesting to tell them, two were more impecunious than himself, and the other two were not likely to do anything for him. Those rich fellows hate being asked to do anything of that sort.

And then he turned to his letters, but they were nearly all bills, from tradesmen in different stages of indignation, or—which were more serious, reminders from men who had lent him money.

It was a gloomy look-out. Dalton began to understand that he stood alone in the world, with nothing but his own limbs and own brain to help him. He was at the window looking out over the park then, and he felt inclined to knock any one down who came near him. That

your own folly and weakness, your own mad recklessness, and desire to swim with the stream, when you should not have got into the water at all, have led you into the scrape, and that now it is too late to begin again, too late ever to hope that you will be given another so fair a start. He strolled back again to the other men, and hated them for their endless talk and open-seeming friendship.

Dick Lorrequer, a cheery youth, with nothing in the world, came in just then.

“Come and dine to-night, Dick, with my brother and self?” asked Dalton laconically.

“Where?”

“The Rag. Eight.”

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“All right. Very glad.”

“Harry Vane’s coming.”

“All right.”

Dalton took his hat, and went out.

Something must be done. Those fellows were no use at all. He went out by the streets at the back; a poor woman begged of him. It was misery worse than his. He gave her a shilling.

But he did not want to be thanked in that way,—he had done nothing.

All at once across his vision there swam the face of one he loved, with her dark hair and liquid soft eyes. It came suddenly—a sudden beam of light in the darkness. He smiled to himself, then he swore between his teeth, and made a clutch with his arm, as though he would grasp something. It proceeded from his impotence, and it was a clutch after hap-

the gloom seemed to have left his face.  
That sudden memory had chased it away.

Later, to see him in the City, talking here, arguing there, bargaining now, entreating sometimes, as different from the indolent, satirical Dalton known at Kirkcudbright and in the regiment, one would think he was a new man. Still it could not be done. He was trying to raise money to discharge all these worrying claims. Would no one believe in his expectations ? Alas ! why did any one know anything about Lord Kirkcudbright ! He could not help wishing that his father's name would set him on his legs a little better than it did.

Well ! he had better go to the Jews and get that five hundred for immediate

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needs, and then perhaps something might turn up. He was sitting in Messrs. Dod and Longstrain's office in Cornhill when he came to this determination ; the ceaseless telegram annoyed him, the clerk next door annoyed him more ; the lengthened absence and delay of Messrs. Dod and Longstrain was an insult, and the substantial uncompromising simple furniture of the room was wearying to one in his nervous state.

He would wait no longer for Messrs. Dod and Longstrain. After all, he did not think they were reliable. He took his hat and passed out.

“ Say I will come back presently. I cannot wait now,” said he to the clerk.

The old, old story. His friend, Benjamin Samuels, would be happy to oblige. Lord Dalton could have the money, but

could have a thousand, doubtless, in a day or two—but—

“ Of course, I can get a bill backed,” said Dalton.

“ Yesh, your lordship, of course you can. And who by? Who is in town just now? ”

In town or out of town was much the same to Dalton. He had pretty well come to the end of his tether, and Ben knew it as well as he did. The isolation of desolation stretched out before him.

All at once he thought of Lord Swansea.

Just for Fanny’s sake he might do this for him. Dalton was not quite clear how matters stood between them. Certainly she had danced with Lord Swansea, and

when the time for saying good-bye had come, Lord Swansea had said it to Fanny with something of triumph in his air.

“Swansea is passing through town,” said Lord Dalton, twirling his moustache.

“Oh, my Earl of Swansea. Oh, very well, your lordship. If you can get him to sign,” said Ben with alacrity, “and one more you could easily find—even now, I should think.”

“Oh yes; one more I could easily find.”

Then there was silence; while Ben partially waited for the name of that other one, and Lord Dalton wondered to himself who it was to be.

“Well, my lord,” said Ben at last, willing to give up that “one more,” caught by the glare of Lord Swansea’s name, “I’ll write the bill, and you shall bring it

“At once—to-morrow.”

“Vell, my lord, I vill do it. You have never found me fail yet.”

“Oh, never.”

That's it ; make a noose, pull it tight, tighter. Now you've got him, you think. Here's a millstone—small, maybe, but they increase somehow, these millstones. Anyhow, it felt heavy round Dalton's neck, as he went downstairs out into the street again from Benjamin Samuels' dingy abode.

Now he must go to Lord Swansea. It was very unpleasant. Let him put it off a little to get his thoughts together ; he would walk slowly.

“You can't walk very slowly in the City,” said he aloud to himself.

“No, you can’t, Lord Dalton.”

It was Julius Hawkshaw.

“I was just passing you, when I heard your voice and saw you,” added Julius.

“How odd!” said Dalton, shaking hands with him. “I never do talk to myself, but I was thinking. . . . Did not know you were in town.”

As he stood holding the rich man’s hand, an idea that had occurred to him before now recurred with greater force than ever.

“No; I’m only up for a day, on business. I am just on my way to my father’s offices. I’m going down to-morrow or Wednesday.”

“What are you doing to-night?”

“Nothing. Why?”

“Will you come and dine with me and Dick at the Rag?”

“ Many thanks.”

“ I’m just going off to Swansea now—to see him on business.”

“ Oh, indeed ! ”

“ Settlements, I suppose ! ” thought Julius to himself, and felt extremely annoyed. Nothing went right with him during the rest of that day, and by the time he reached the Rag, at eight, he had worked himself into a state of irritation which was more likely to prove amusing for his friends than comfortable for himself.

Dalton had mentioned Lord Swansea’s name thus familiarly, thinking it looked well to be on such easy terms with so wealthy a peer of the realm. Little did he know that he had well nigh overshot

the mark, as far as his own game was concerned, and little did he feel himself of the confidence he had assumed as he approached Grosvenor Place, where Lord Swansea resided.

He was not kept waiting two minutes. He had hardly had time to find the newspaper, and sit down in the armchair when his lordship entered.

“How do you do, my dear Dalton ? Delighted to see you.”

“He thinks I have brought a message from Kirkcudbright,” thought Dalton, as he sprang up with alacrity.

“How do you do, Lord Swansea ? I only came up this morning, and am going down again to-morrow, if I can.”

“Ah !—London is not inviting. I am off myself, if nothing should happen to detain me.”

sorry to disappoint him.

“The fact is, Lord Swansea, I was obliged to come up—on business—money matters——”

“Ah !”

There was a slight accession of colour on Lord Swansea’s face.

“And I am in a temporary difficulty. I have ventured to come to you this afternoon, for you are such an old friend.”

“Yes, my dear boy !”

“Such an old friend of my father’s, and of all of us, and——”

There was something of a triumphant sneer on the old man’s face. It was just how he looked when he said good-bye to Fanny on Saturday.

“What can I do for you, my dear Dalton ?”

“Why, just this.” And Dalton began to produce Ben Samuels’ bill. “You see I am very candid, and go straight to the point with you. Will you play the part of a friend and sign this ? ”

“How much is it ? ”

“Five hundred.”

“Five hundred!” mused Lord Swansea, looking at him. “How long have you got?”

“Six months.”

“You could repay in that time, I should think ? ”

“Yes ; before that, I hope.”

Lord Swansea sat nibbling his pen, looking at Dalton.

“It is only the form,” said Dalton.

“Between friends there should be no hesitation over a thing of this sort.”

Dalton coloured. To himself he swore Fanny should not marry him.

to you or yours in any way. But——”

“Yes, Lord Swansea?”

“I was thinking what your father would say. Whether he——”

“I was going to ask you not to mention it to him just yet.”

“Oh, very well.”

Then there was another silence.

“How is Lady Fanny, Dalton—eh?”

Lord Dalton laughed.

“Look, my boy, if I sign this, I shall expect something of you; your co-operation. My back’s up now, and I mean to win her!”

“All right.”

They looked at each other for a moment.

Lord Swansea believed in the blue yes and the look they gave him.

Then he signed the paper.

“We'll shake hands over it,” said the old man, ceremoniously.

Dalton gave his hand.

“That's just how he looked when he shook hands with Fanny. I hate him ! ”

But Lord Dalton breathed more freely ; he had only to find the other one now.



## CHAPTER II.

Now Dick had been told by Fanny about her visit to the Priory. Only she had not made much of it: she had confessed, indeed, that she had taken shelter there from the storm, and that she had not been alone—because one of the girls from the village had been with her—and that then Julius had let her have his carriage to come home in. That was all. So that Dick had not thought much of it.

Still, when he found himself dining at the Rag with Dalton and Julius, he could

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not help feeling very much astonished. Why had Dalton asked him? and why had Julius come? For his part, he, Dick, did not think Julius was half such a fool as he looked; but still, why had he come?

And Julius, too, was astonished.

Why had he been asked?

In his heart of hearts he was very angry with the whole Kirkcudbright family. His mother and father and sister were all angry with them; they did not like Lady Kirkcudbright, and he himself individually was angry with Fanny. Not really angry, of course: he was too indifferent for that; for to-day he had finally made up his mind he did not care one straw about her, and that she might marry Lord Swansea or whoever she liked when she liked, as far as

he confessed to himself. He had fancied that she was frank, candid, and truthful, and now he found she was none of these things.

Why had she come to him the other night, as if she trusted him? Why had she said he was the best friend she had in the world, and had accepted so gladly his promise of saying nothing about it? Why had she taken his flower, and blushed and smiled over it? Why had she said out hunting she had been looking for him; and why, at dinner—oh, why—had she been so sweet, so frank, so confidential, if she was meaning all the while to marry Lord Swansea? Why, moreover, had she indulged in that vehement tirade against wealth and against the possessors

of it, and she, meanwhile, was probably engaged to marry Lord Swansea? And then later, why, when he had gone to claim his dance . . . oh, well, no, it was no use going into that—she had behaved shamefully, and there was now no doubt that she was a consummate hypocrite!

Now, for his part, the one thing that Julius hated was a hypocrite.

Having thought over all this, no wonder that he came to dinner in no very enviable mood towards his hosts, or that it required the best of cookery and the best of wine to soothe him down. But such is man, and so easily influenced is he by corporeal comforts, the more rigid part of him, called mind, easily unbends and thaws before delicacies offered to his palate!

As for the conversation, it pleased them

sally now and then that surprised them all. They did not talk of the Suez Canal save to make it the subject of an execrable pun, nor did they converse much about the first or second Slave Circulars, though, indeed, Dick did attempt to lead them that way once in a pause. But they very soon settled that England was the first among modern nations, that she should therefore hasten to put down slavery, and all that tends, as it does, to the degradation of humanity, and so they dismissed this very trifling subject.

“ Been hunting, Lorrequer ? ”

“ Had an A 1 day with the V.W.H. the other day ; had forty minutes in the morning without a check—pretty well pounded, I can tell you ; and, after that,

a very good five and twenty minutes.  
Have you had sport?"

"Very fair," answered Dick. "Last week, however, our master had a nasty cropper, and I'm not sure when he'll be out again."

"Ah, saw it in the paper."

"He's not so young as he was."

"I had a spin with the drag, the other day," said Vane.

"Well?"

"Oh, prime!"

"I can't ride a yard with the drag," said Dick.

"Oh, you're a true-bred sportsman, you are," said Lorrequer.

"He doesn't like going miles to cover, and then tearing pell-mell for half an hour after nothing," said Dalton.

"And yet the Society for the Protec-

their hearts could legitimately encourage, for it is good for the health, makes your horses jump, and you take the life of nothing."

"They say they like the excitement of it," said Dick.

"Must be hard pushed for something to fill the vacant hours, I should think," said Julius.

"One likes to forget one's self gloriously sometimes," said Lorrequer, lifting his glass as he spoke. "Your health, sir; your good health," he added, addressing Julius.

"One is bored so much in life," said Dalton indolently, "I think it is a good thing to be sure of a fast gallop once in a way. One manages to forget *atra cura* for a little time."

"Oh, I know—we are all bores, even the very pleasantest, and the most charming amongst us, at different periods of our lives," said Vane.

"Not to everybody, I hope," suggested Julius.

"I believe we are: I fancy there is hardly one person of our more intimate acquaintance, who can say with truth, they have not felt us, at some time or other, to be so."

"I am bored very little," said Dalton, "by people; and I am a most agreeable fellow to talk to, for having no sort of memory, I never remember the oldest story, so the greatest bore's most ancient tale does for me as new."

"Till he gets to the point, and then it all comes back to you."

"Yes; but I don't let him see that."

ment beau, mais c'est bien ennuyeux.' ”

“Or, don't you remember,” said Julius, “what Lamb said, about ‘the measureless bores’—that he knew a quarter of a mile of them, seventeen brothers and sixteen sisters; and that one of them used to come and fix his long legs on his fender, and tell a story of a shark, every night, and that he never began it without Lamb grudging that salt-sea ravener not having had his gorge of him.”

“The fellow is learned,” said Lorrequer in a low voice.

“But Dickens was the best,” said Dick. “He said his face had become fixedly sad from the constant boredom he had to endure; that the literary ladies had taken all his cheerfulness, that

a certain New-Englander had fixed a line in his chin, that the literary characters of small towns had put the print of a crow's foot on the outside of his left eye, and that a dimple had left his cheek ; he had felt himself robbed of it by a certain wise judge."

"Very good, Dick."

"Very good indeed, Dick, for you."

"You should have seen Vane the other day at billiards, Lorrequer," said Dick.

"Why ?"

"I beat him, and——"

"You beat him ?"

"He gave me points, of course."

"How many ?" asked Julius.

"Oh, ten ! But, when I passed him in the score, you should have seen his face—he piques himself on billiards, you know ; and then, as I kept getting on, the signs were unmistakable."

ment. You always know——”

“Oh, yes ; we know.”

“ You shall frizzle for this, Dick.”

“ Thanks ; I don’t approve of cremation.”

“ Well, now, I do,” said Julius. “ So clean.”

“ I don’t want to be reduced to a handful of white ash.”

“ Oh, yes ; don’t let us defraud the worms of their rights,” said Lorrequer.

“ Unhealthy for us, if we should be left behind,” said Vane.

“ Oh, I can’t help that. It is your lookout. I am not sure whether a nauseous odour reaching your nostrils as you pass my resting-place may not be a more efficacious sermon than all the discourses

crammed into your ears during the course of your threescore years and ten."

"Think of the expense."

"Expense," said Dick. "That's like old Swansea."

"Is he a screw?" asked Julius.

"Oh, awful! But I like the expense—my feathers, my crape, my horses, my mutes——"

"Yes," said Lorrequer, "a somewhat comforting reflection, that at last, owing to me, trade will flourish, and some poor men at least will taste of some of that money that my so-called friends and relatives never disbursed in my lifetime for my benefit, give them hints as I might."

"'Every dog has his day,' is the old saw," said Dalton, "but many of us never have it till we take our last little drive, when gaping crowds learn our worth for

earth opens for us to go down to her bowels, and enables us at least to bid a graceful farewell over a dignified exit."

"Yes," answered Lorrequer, "is the hurry of managers and the jealousy of fellow-players such that we are to be deprived of even that now?"

"Oh, of course I should keep it up," said Julius. "Pomp and shams all through the play, pomp and shams to help you off the stage at the end."

"Well," said Dalton, smiling; "we can't do without, it seems. Man is nothing without extraneous aids. Our tailor is our most powerful friend, for he makes us what we are. Princes may give titles, but he helps us to carry them off well."

"Yes," said Vane, "to him entirely we owe the respect, or the awe, or the admiration we may inspire."

Later, when Julius and Dalton found themselves in the smoking-room, apart from the rest, the conversation became more interesting.

"And so Lord Swansea is a terrible screw, is he?"

"Yes, I believe so. Those rich men generally are. At least——"

"Yes, I know what you mean. Well, I'm well off, but I don't think I'm a screw, I hope not. I hate meanness. 'Live and let live,' say I."

"Yes," acquiesced Dalton.

"Or rather 'Do as you would be done by.' But still I pay my way. I should hate debts."

"Yes."

should think, Hawkshaw? ”

“ No. Perhaps my house is . . . .  
Well, but then I can afford it.”

“ And there are the horses.”

“ Yes, there are the horses.”

“ Does the farm pay ? ”

“ I don’t mean to lose by it, if I can  
help. It should keep itself.”

“ Yes, certainly.”

“ I must say I like managing. I hate  
being done.”

“ Ah ! ”

“ Well, why should people think you  
a fool when a very little trouble on your  
part will save both your character and  
your pocket ? ”

“ No. Exactly.”

Then they smoked in silence for awhile.

For the life of him Dalton did not see how to ask this prosperous manager to back his bill.

"I wish you'd walk over and see my pictures and things some day, Lord Dalton."

"Of course I will, my dear fellow, with the greatest pleasure in life."

"I am going down to-morrow."

"I wish I could, but——"

"Did not you catch Lord Swansea to-day, then?"

"Oh yes! Lord Swansea was there all right; but——"

"I suppose it is a delicate business rather?"

"Eh?"

"I mean it takes time."

"What?"

"Why, I thought your sister was engaged to marry Lord Swan——"

What may be, I don't know, but oh, no;  
Fanny has not said Yes, I think."

"I beg your pardon," said Julius. "I heard—or at least I don't know what I heard exactly, and then your going to see him to-day."

"Oh yes, my dear fellow, I quite understand. But there is nothing settled, I assure you."

"I am very glad."

"The —— you are—why?"

"He is so old, and she is so merry—and——"

"Oh yes, exactly."

"But, of course, I have no business to think about it at all. I only meant glad for her sake."

"Yes. No, I went to see Swansea on

business of my own. A case of a friend in need—a—”

“Oh, I beg your pardon,” said Julius hastily.

“Not at all. I thought he might help me.”

“Yes, of course. And I suppose he did?”

“Yes—oh yes!”

Just then, Dick, ignoring Dalton’s look of thunder, called out to Julius to come and make up a rubber.

“Dalton hates whist,” said Dick.

“I will, gladly,” said Julius, springing up in sudden good humour.

“You won’t forget your promise to come over, Lord Dalton,” repeated he to him as he turned away.

“No, not likely. I shall be over soon.”

“ Why did you ask the country neighbour, eh, Dalton ? ” asked Dick.

“ Met him in the street. Something to say. No harm done, was it ? ”

“ Oh no ! ”

“ Tobacco, wasn’t it ? ”

“ Fanny says pills.”

“ Does she, though ? ”

“ I am not sure, by the by, that she says pills now ; but she did say pills.”





### CHAPTER III.

LADY FANNY was sorely puzzled.

Circumstances had seemingly been too much for her, or, as she herself put it, her mother had been too much for her. But though Lady Kirkcudbright had helped to entangle her daughter in the net, she did not seem at all inclined to play the part of the mouse now, and help to make a hole to further her daughter's escape.

Perhaps she hardly knew how much store her daughter set on escaping promptly; certainly she knew not how much Fanny thought her pride and dignity

But then Lady Kirkcudbright knew nothing of that first unlucky meeting in the park between Fanny and Julius, and therefore she knew nothing either of Fanny's later anxiety to stand well in his eyes, and to efface the bad impression her foolish words must have made.

The day after Lord Swansea had so readily fallen into Lady Kirkcudbright's little game by giving Julius a false notion as to his relations towards Fanny, Lady Kirkcudbright had come into Fanny's room early, had upbraided her with falsehood and want of confidence in not telling her of the visit to the Priory, and had received a promise that Fanny would not on any account encourage any attentions from the pill-man.

Lady Fanny had started angrily at the epithet.

“It is your own name for him, child ! ”

“But I am not sure, mamma. I think that perhaps we should not call our neighbour that.”

“Only among ourselves, I say it, of course.”

After that Fanny had driven over to inquire after Mr. Lawley, and as she came up to the house, who should come out but Julius Hawkshaw !

Fanny had already smiled, her hand even was half extended, but yet—could she believe it ?—Julius never so much as lifted his hat, or seemed as if he saw her.

Lady Fanny was at first too much astonished to feel angry, and afterwards too angry to make any exclamation.

Yet, thinking it over that night, she decided that he had a right to be angry. She had been rude, unbearable, had refused to speak to him when he had come up to her, had turned away when she should have danced with him—yes, on the whole, she would put her pride in her pocket and say nothing about it.

After all, she was rather pleased, on second thoughts, that Julius could be angry about it.

Then Sunday had come, and for a wonder Julius was at morning church.

“I don’t believe he is a pill-man at all,” said she to herself, as she looked at him from her place in the choir.

But she was quite determined that he should speak to her after service, and

thought of a thousand little penitent but very brief expressions of contrition which should at once, coming from her to him, win him over to forgiveness.

Nay, so thinking, she grew quite nervous, and recited to herself—

“Won’t you shake hands with me, Mr. Hawkshaw?” quite tremulously, during the sermon; was glad when she found a loud ‘Now’ from Mr. Camelford was not the final clause, and thanked him from the bottom of her heart for the respite given.

“I won’t say that; I’ll ask him what I have done—that will be better.”

But then they really had to go, and she had risen in good time from her place to avoid her mother and sisters, and to meet Julius on the steps.

There for a moment she had stood,

had looked round, smiling forgiveness, but he had only said hurriedly, and even generally—

“I beg your pardon,” and had passed on to join Mrs. Camelford.

“He said it as if I were a school-mistress,” said she angrily to herself. “Perhaps even he took me for a school-mistress.”

And then Monday had come, and Fanny had gone out hunting, but Julius was not out; and then Wednesday came, and there he was.

But by this time Fanny had become doubtful and very much puzzled with regard to him; she felt she did not understand him or his feeling on the subject, and she feared dreadfully being

cut again, should any one be looking on. She no longer had a bow or a smile quite ready for him.

But there he was, and when Fanny came up and nearly every hat in the field went off, and nearly every face had a smile for her, it was more annoying than anything she had ever known to see that one young man, standing a little apart, a cold look of slight amusement on his face, and his hat firm on his head.

Was there ever hat so heavy, so tall, so ugly as that?

Fanny was used to all sorts of bows: patronising bows, neighbourly bows, Hail-fellow-well-met bows from sporting farmers, ceremonious bows, wavy cringing bows, short, sharp, and decisive bows, very slight bows, very large bows; hats quickly off, hats slow in movement, hats

a hat is when it is never moved at all.

Julius's hat might have been a monument for its immovability ! And all day she seemed to be an object of indifference to Julius. He did not avoid her—indeed, he was generally behind ; but certainly he never sought her. Once, indeed, he had been seen by Fanny sailing away in front of her, but she thought then that she hated him, and so she had let him go.

“ Only I should like that bough to knock his hat off ! ”

But the bough did not do it, and she had watched him, nearly going over Golightly's head down a bank through her inadvertence—all for nothing.

After that day, she had felt very un-

happy about Julius ; and when any person begins to feel unhappy about another, it is getting serious.

She said nothing to any one, not even to Katie, or Dick, or Alice, but she thought to herself, as she slowly laid her hat and whip aside—

“ I suppose he will never speak to me again. I should have liked him just for a pleasant acquaintance—a friend. He is so honest. And I am sorry about it, because I am not so bad as he thinks.”

And then that evening, late, Dalton had come to her when they were playing billiards, and had said—

“ Did you see Hawkshaw out to-day, Fan ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Did you speak to him ? ”

“ No.”

Fanny opened her eyes.

"I was there this afternoon—to see it.  
He is a man of taste."

"I dare say he is," said Fanny.

She could not say to Dalton that Julius Hawkshaw despised her, hated her, would not speak to her.

Could she never change it?—never win him over to respect her, and admire her, and sympathise with her ardent love for truth and good and the right? Ah, surely it was not too late. He must learn to like and respect them all; he must learn to look up to her and her family for their straightforwardness and honesty, and for the use they made of their position.

And, meanwhile, this is what Dalton had been to the Priory about. Certainly he had been laying the first stone towards the building of that house Beautiful which Fanny was to establish for Julius to admire.

Dalton had gone over with that unlucky bill, signed only with Lord Swansea's signature, in his pocket.

It was late, and Julius had just come in from hunting, and was sitting in his study by the fireside, resting after the day.

He was very cross.

Lady Fanny had avoided him.

Now, since dining in town with Dalton on Monday night, when he heard that she was not engaged to marry Lord Swansea, he had not felt so irritated against her, and he had not felt so par-

smile of recognition ready for him, and indeed had never really looked his way. He had never had an opportunity of bowing to her—at least, so it seemed to him.

Once he had been riding with an old bore, whom every one avoided because he talked so much, and she had crossed their path: then she had smiled openly in the old bore's face—which was ridiculous—but she had not seemed to see Julius.

Probably, now that she was thinking of marrying Lord Swansea, she wished to cut the acquaintance of all such inferior persons as Julius Hawkshaw.

And then Lord Dalton was announced.

“True to your promise, my lord, you have come over soon.”

"I thought I should be sure to find you at this hour."

They sat some time talking in a desultory way over the fire; then Julius proposed to show him something of what he had done, and as Dalton looked at the decorated rooms and the different artistic objects that met his gaze, he was profuse in admiration. Then he was introduced to the relations, and Moll insisted on his having some tea. As he sat there, looking at them, he felt his admiration cooling.

Suddenly he asked Julius to give him a moment in private, and Julius then led the way back to his study, and closed the door behind Lord Dalton.

"I say, Hawkshaw, old fellow, I had an idea just now when I was looking at all your beautiful things. If you don't like it, say so, you know."

difficulty, you know ; and, in fact, it is this." Out came the piece of paper. "I must raise £500 this week, and have got the money, in fact, promised, and I have one security—old Swansea—but I must have one more signature, and in the country it is so difficult to find any one. Hadn't time in London, and it would save me a journey up."

"Oh, exactly!"

What a comical predicament for Julius !  
Be security for Fanny's brother with  
Lord Swansea for £500 !

"Would you mind ? Could promise  
you interest, you know. It's only——"

"What did Lord Swansea say ?"

"Oh, here's his name right enough—  
look !"

As Julius looked, he felt a sudden insane wish to out-do Lord Swansea in helping Lady Fanny's brother.

"I hate signing bills."

"Do you?"

"Yes."

He never did enjoy himself with his money, was not extravagant, foolish, as other young men allowed themselves to be; could not he, just for once—his father would know nothing about it—let his influence be felt?—be more powerful than Lord Swansea, just through his money? After all, perhaps that was the only way that ever could give him superior influence; nothing else was likely to give him the whip-hand that he could see.

"I am sorry," said Dalton.

"I could lend you the money. I shouldn't mind that. I don't care about the interest, you know."

like, and as you like."

Was there ever such a Quixotic neighbour? Oh, this was no pill-man, and no son of a pill-man. It was arrant treason to say so.

"I should be delighted!"

Where's the man delighted to lend money without interest, and indifferent about repayment, who could be refused?

Dalton, brimming over with confused acknowledgments, stood by while the cheque was written.

"You might write to Lord Swansea from here, and say——"

"Say that you—— Yes, I will. And to my Jew, too."

Julius watched him curiously while he did it. It was a satisfaction to him to

put that note to Lord Swansea, written on the Priory paper, aside with his own letters for post.

Afterwards he took his hat to walk a bit of the way back with Lord Dalton.

Strange, though he was so grateful to him, when they got to the top of the park Dalton would have his company no longer.

“I wonder why?” thought Julius to himself; and vaguely wondering, watched him from a distance.

“Oh!” said he aloud to himself presently, stopping suddenly and wheeling round. “Now I know.”

He looked sad all the way home; yet he was thinking more of Lady Fanny than of beautiful Kate.

It was into Kate’s ivy cottage that Lord Dalton had turned.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE breach between Lady Fanny and Julius seemed utterly irremediable. As the days passed on, and they still outwardly ignored each other's existence in the hunting-fields, whence Mr. Lawley was still absent—every opportunity for reconciliation lost, it only seemed to set them further apart than ever, and to make any sign of friendship impossible.

But it was in fact ridiculous.

Angry and vexed and sore they both were, doubtless, but there was a great deal of pride at the bottom of it.

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Fanny thought if she were to speak to him he might not answer, or he might say something she could not bear the rest of the field to hear (and a hunting-field in such a case, is argus-eyed and argus-eared) and her dignity could not bear to suffer.

And, besides, how dreadful—how very dreadful—it would be afterwards !

Julius thought she seemed utterly unwilling to greet him, that she preferred dropping him, that she liked better to talk to the smallest farmer out on the roughest cob, than to speak to him, that she contemplated treating him, in fact, as a sort of black sheep.

Yet she rode better than any lady he had ever seen, had the neatest figure out, and the lightest hand, a smile, too, for every one who came, except for him.

chance by which he could make her speak to him ; if he might open a gate for her, or if he might save her from some danger, or if he might offer her sandwiches ; but then, probably, she would turn away contemptuously, and would say she wanted none of his sandwiches ! He would say nothing, he would do nothing. After all, he could not well afford to be snubbed by Lady Fanny. Suppose any one were to hear ; it would be impossible then to be friends afterwards.

“ Yet—see ! There she was taking a small gingerbread nut from another fellow, and thanking him for it—oh, so prettily ! ”

Why not Julius’s gingerbread nut ?

It was very bitter, indeed.

One day, coming to a gate in a paling that was being held open as they were galloping, there was a call for Lady Fanny—two or three sportsmen wanted to let her go ; Julius was just going, but he reined his horse in hastily for her to pass. She came smiling, thanking them all, and at the gate her eyes met those of Julius, and her habit brushed his foot.

“I smiled,” said Fanny, to herself ; “surely he might come now.”

But Lady Fanny was always smiling ; how was Julius to know that that particular smile was meant for him ?

Again—once, waiting for a covert to be drawn, four men were riding in a row across a field. Julius was one of them. Lady Fanny met them ; three hats went off simultaneously, but Julius’s remained firm.

"There is something rude, coarse, brutal about a man when his hat doesn't move," said she to herself.

"What was I to do? I am not a German, I cannot bow to a lady when I know she wants to cut me," said Julius to himself.

And then later, when he had been driven nearly wild with hearing her pleasant rippling laughter to others all day, and noticing her witty little sallies, provocative of much laughter among those whom she honoured with her conversation—when Julius was feeling very sore, very much injured, and very indignant indeed, when he met her, closely packed amid a crowd of horses and people in a narrow lane, he looked

full into her eyes, and let her see how angry he was.

Lady Fanny returned the look with one almost as long—a sort of strange fascination seemed to hold them both—and then she grew very pale, and the words she had been speaking died away on her lips.

Yet afterwards a little thrill of pleasure shot through her, as she discovered for the first time that Julius, too, could feel.

There was intense satisfaction in that. He was not then indifferent. Though he did speak to every one else but herself; though he had a hand for a farmer and not for her; yet he did see her after all, he did know she was there; he did perhaps care a little.

Fanny began to dream how he thought, what he thought of her.

cared for her ; that once he had spoken ardent, hurried, passionate words to her. She had not thought so much of them then, but now, seen through this long vista of trouble that had since fallen upon her, they seemed sweet, delicious.

“ What did he say ? He must have forgotten them now. I dare not count them as said. He asked me if he might call it his lucky day when he first saw me —when he first—— Ah ! but that is all over now ; it is lost, gone—a sweetness faded, forgotten, irrecoverable. He asked me how it was to finish. Ah, if I might tell him now, though so late ! ”

And then Lady Fanny pulled herself up abruptly. What business had she to be thinking thus of a young man who would

not speak to her now—one who despised her so utterly !

“ What does he think of the people who do speak to me, I wonder ? ”

But somehow the truant thoughts would stray back again. He had cared about her.

Something indefinable, involuntary, had told her so. A sense of shelter, of safety, when she was with him ; a sense that whatever she said, if she said it to him, it would be right, and whatever she did, if he were by, it would be right.

Could it really all be brushed away, all so soon forgotten ? Had a fit of pride, of anger, effaced the whole of a dream that he had seemed to think so sweet ?

“ I wish he were not so rich,” mused she to herself. “ If he were only not

take some step, unprecedented in its forwardness, and insist on his friendship being given to her again."

But she could not do that.

If he could only lose all his money, if he could lose place, wealth, the position he had gained, then she might go to him and say she was true and sincere—that it was all a misunderstanding.

But yet, after all, perhaps, Julius might like his money and his things better than herself. No; she must wish him no misfortune.

Yet certainly as long as he was Croesus, nothing could be done. He would only set it down as more scheming hypocrisy, as setting other toils to catch him in

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the absence of her aged admirer, Lord Swansea.

No ; certainly nothing could be done.

“ But still,” said she, half aloud, “ I will, at all events, show him he is wrong. I will, at all events, never disgrace my lineage. If my life cannot be great, it shall at least be perfectly good ; it shall, if possible, thus stand out from the rest of the lives around us, so that when I die, or when by any other act his attention is called to me, he shall say musingly to himself, ‘ I loved her once,’ and then he can add, ‘ And I was right.’ There will be something even in that, for how often do we not love unworthily, and have cause to congratulate ourselves on waking from the dream ! ”

Poor Lady Fanny !

Not only was that monumental hat

shaw was in everybody's mouth. He was the man of the county, spending money right royally, doing good here, originating plans there, carrying help everywhere.

Dalton and Dick talked of him from morning to night; only Lady Kirkcudbright's thin lips became compressed when his name was mentioned.

"Why don't you talk to him more out hunting, Fan?" asked Dalton.

"She can't be quite Hail-fellow-well-met with everybody who chooses to come and buy some land in the county, Dalton."

"No, but she might be civil."

"She is, I think, perfectly civil," said Dick, who had been away, and who did not know that Fanny and Julius never spoke.

"I don't think he wants more of my conversation, Dalton," said Fanny laughing. "It is not so rare, or so precious, but that he can get it if he likes to come for it."

"You probably have said something very rude," answered Dalton. "Your tongue is very sharp sometimes, Fan, ever so much sharper than you think."



## CHAPTER V.

THE Duchess of Arranmore sat in a sort of arcade, surrounded with flowers, at Bolton. It was neither conservatory nor room, for though it had good substantial walls, yet there were large high-peaked windows let in, and there were arches that went tapering up till they met very near the roof, and to sustain the arches there were pillars, thickly covered with creepers and climbing plants. Then there was a large border all along the entrance to it from the hall, quite full of camel-

lias and other plants ; it made a long dazzling vista of radiant hues.

Large plants were growing in pots, china and glass mixed with the flowers on the walls, and Persian carpets were placed here and there over the tile-flooring in front of the sofas and divan.

A pleasant enough place to sit. On these winter mornings it was a regular sun-trap.

The duchess, seated in a corner, with the flowers all about her, and her work on her knee, with a little table beside her, covered with bright worsteds, and her letters, and a half-cut book, looked like an illustration of a great broad smile in this work-a-day world. The sun, however, seemed to think her a fit object for his smile to rest on, and she basked in his sheen, content.

with a smile upon his face, as she sat stitching away at her cross-stitch as if for her very life, and too much absorbed to see him.

A bird flew against the glass.

Her needle half stayed.

"That Julius Hawkshaw is the very ——" said she aloud to herself.

"Louie, Louie, my dear," expostulated the duke, amazed.

"Oh, Sydney, are you there?" answered she quietly, now really putting her work down and looking up. "I was thinking, Why, how shocked you look. What did I say?"

"You said that that Julius Hawkshaw is—"

"Ah, yes, I know. Well, it is very

extraordinary, isn't it? Those were not my own words, you know."

"Why—you said——"

"Yes, but wait. I heard from Lord Swansea this morning. Here is his letter," picking it out from a pile of papers as she spoke.

"That was the young man you asked me to speak to at Kirkcudbright, wasn't it?" asked the duke.

"Yes, a very harmless, charming young man. And now, here is Swansea this morning, amongst four pages of stale gossip which he might have spared himself the trouble to retail, tells me he does not understand why the Kirkcudbrights have taken up this young nobody so hotly; that he thinks there is some monetary transaction between him and Dalton; that it must all be very humiliating for you

said decidedly she could not think of him for one of the girls."

"Yes, Caroline was a fool about it, quite. I told her so. I think he would do very nicely for one of the girls, if he would have one."

"Oh!"

"What do you think, duke?"

"Plenty of money, isn't there, Louie? Only his family——"

"Yes, but she need not marry them. He is charming in himself, and plenty of money as you say, and now a days one cannot be so particular. It is no sort of use imagining that one can. There's a carriage, Sydney; just see who it is."

“ Why, Louie, it is the Kirkcudbright carriage.”

“ Full, I dare say, and they'll want no end of luncheon ! ”

“ Louie, about that young man, if you like him, why don't you ask him over some day, and one of the girls, whichever you think best.”

“ I am not at all sure that I shan't.

Lady Kirkcudbright was very well content with herself. Just in the very fulness of her heart she had driven over to Bolton, and Fanny, not seeming so content, she had brought over too, to catch a little brightness from the sunny duchess. Only the other day she had had a visit from Mrs. Camelford, and that lady had congratulated her on her daughter's engagement to Lord Swansea. Lady Kirkcudbright had had to burst

a little premature, and that nothing was settled or announced yet; but she had not denied it.

Meanwhile, in her heart she was intensely delighted to find such a rumour had been spread; no danger would be apprehended from that vulgar, unbearable Julius Hawkshaw now.

Then that morning she had received a long letter from Lord Swansea. He was still in town. Were none of them coming up? Dalton he had seen, and it was a little mysterious to him what an important personage that Mr. Hawkshaw had become to them all at Kirkcudbright. Why, Dalton seemed to think of nothing else, and to depend upon him entirely. Then Lord Swansea

asked most tenderly after Lady Fanny, and seemed to be depending upon Lady Kirkcudbright for a hint as to what he could do next.

"At any rate he bears 'no malice,'" thought her ladyship, "and there he is to my hand just as much as ever he was. I dare say Fanny will have him now—she seems quieter."

In the fulness of her heart she drove over to Bolton.

"How d'ye do, Caroline, how d'ye do," said the duchess, watching Lady Kirkcudbright as she came towards her through the flowers; "I can't get up because of my work."

"I wonder what her brain has been busy about of late," thought the duchess, as she put out her hand.

Then she lifted her face for a kiss.

“Yes. What’s the good of an invasion?”

“No, no. Well, shall we go in, or will you sit here?”

“Oh, here, by all means, it is so lovely.”

“Been hunting, Fanny?”

“Oh yes, often. We have had some capital runs.”

“And who is out?”

“Oh, nobody much.”

“Nobody much? Look here, Caroline, I had a volume from that idiotic old friend of yours, Lord Swansea, and I don’t know what he means or wants, I’m sure.”

Lady Kirkcudbright and Fanny both blushed brightly.

“ Old friend of mine ! Why, I thought he was yours. I’m sure you always talk to him and seem to like him immensely. In fact, you first introduced him to me.”

“ I dare say I did, but then it was only to get rid of him probably.”

“ Well, what does he say ? ”

“ Why this,” and then a thought struck the duchess. If there were anything about money between Julius and Dalton and Swansea, Fanny might just as well know nothing about it. “ Run away for a minute, would you, Fanny ? ”

Now that was hard. She knew she was infinitely sharper than them all, and could throw more light on the subject, and now to be told to run away just when they were going to say that which she wanted to hear, and when she could put

"This is what Lord Swansea says, Caroline," continued the duchess when they were alone, "he says that that Julius Hawkshaw is the very——"

A light blush suffused the duchess's cheek as she repeated the objectionable sentence.

Lady Kirkcudbright's eyes fell before hers, and the two ladies sat silent for a moment.

"Why?"

"I have been puzzling over it all the morning; I can think of nothing else. What can Lord Swansea and Julius Hawkshaw have to do with each other?"

"It is very odd. He warns me against him too."

“Does he?—could he be jealous?”

“Impossible. I’m thankful to say Fanny never speaks to Mr. Hawkshaw.”

“What! foolish woman, have you completely spoilt that romance of two young hearts?”

“Completely.”

“You’ll repent it—when Fanny is old and forlorn, you’ll repent it sadly.”

“I expect Fanny to marry well with her looks; the other two I cannot hope to do so well.”

“Caroline, do you think that young Hawkshaw could have helped Dalton in any way——?”

“Oh, Heaven forbid, I should die if I thought we were under any obligation to him. There is something on Dalton’s mind, but——”

“Does he speak of him much?”

“ With that family.”

“ What does he say about them ? ”

“ He says they are very good people.”

“ Caroline, does he mean to marry the girl ? ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Have you ever suggested such a thing to him ? ”

“ Why shouldn’t I, Louisa ? ”

“ Oh, you have, have you ? Well, but what would that have to do with old Swansea. No ; depend upon it, it is something to do with money. Now, Caroline, you have a care, or you will make no end of mischief.”

“ Am I to be civil to the man ? ”

“ I should advise it.”

“But I cannot let him marry Fanny. All London—everybody—would cry out; the mere sight of that father and mother and sister——”

“There is no objection to the young man himself. He is exceptionally nice. After all, who knows whether he wants to marry Fanny?”

“Of course he does. Think of the position in the county it would give him. I should feel publicly disgraced if I were to allow such a thing.”

“Mind no other disgrace comes on the family by any foolish incivility, if Dalton or Dick or any one should be indebted to him.”

Lady Kirkcudbright groaned in spirit. How was she ever to escape from this tormentor who had chosen to constitute himself her next door neighbour?

to go and see something in the hot-houses,  
Fanny's turn came.

There, watching her flitting among the flowers, pruning a leaf off here, re-adjusting a twig there, the duchess brought her to a stand-still just opposite her at last. She had a basket and a pair of large scissors in her hand, and she was leaning against one of the pillars ; a glorious background of colour was behind her, and a tendril from a creeper came and twined itself over her head as she stood there. The duchess, looking up into her face, could see every transient emotion passing over it.

“ Have you been amused lately,  
Fanny ? ”

“ No, not at all.”

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“ Why not ? ”

“ We have had all sorts of bothers—money bothers ; we all get into debt for things we don’t want, but which it seems we must have ; and then there is a row with papa.”

“ Poor papa ! ”

“ Yes. Yet he—well, never mind ; it is no use talking about.”

“ Is the hunting nice ? ”

“ No. Mr. Lawley has never got over his fall, and does not come.”

“ Who comes ? Does my young man come ? ”

“ Your young man ? ”

“ Yes ; don’t you remember ? What is his name ? I taught him euchre, and flirted all one evening with him.”

“ O—h, Mr. Hawkshaw ! ”

Fanny coloured ruby red.

“ I thought we settled that he was charming.”

“ Yes.”

“ Well ? ”

“ He and I don’t speak now.”

“ Why ? ”

“ It was mamma.”

And then, by dint of a great deal of questioning, of gentle pressing, of suggestions deftly put, it all came out, and before Fanny knew where she was, for the first time in her life, she had confessed her innermost thoughts to another. The duchess had hold of her hand, and was playing with her fingers by this time.

“ But, of course, he likes you, Fanny ? ”

“ No, no ; I am sure he hates me.”

“Nonsense, my dear. Why should he?”

“I have been so horrid to him. But I wish I had not told you. I can’t tell anybody. I can’t bear myself for liking him—I can’t help it. I never meant to. If I were prettier, I would not mind, but I have got so ugly, I know, since I have been so bothered about old Lord Swansea and everything else.”

“Poor little childie,” said the duchess, smiling, “you must not worry yourself. Do you remember when you were all children, and we had some little plays here in this very arcade, among the flowers, and you were the princess?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you have always been princess for me ever since, and I cannot let any subject be unkind to you.”

“ What shall we do, Fan ? ”

“ Couldn’t you first smother Lord  
Swansea for me ? Then, mamma—— ”

“ No, Fan, I can’t do that ; but I  
might have Mr. Hawkshaw over here.”

“ No, no, no ! Don’t do that. Don’t  
ask him, for worlds, he is so rude to me.”

“ But he is not rude to me.”

“ No—but—— ”

“ What shall we ask him for ? Shall  
we wait till my fancy ball comes off next  
month—my masquerade ball ? ”

“ No ; you must not invite him here at  
all. I don’t want to speak to him again  
—ever—really. Only, I do wish he would  
take his hat off to me out hunting ; it  
is so uncivil.”

“ Or, listen ; I’ll have a Spelling Bee.

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Just the thing—ah ! here's your mother !  
Duke—we must have a Spelling Bee."

" What ! have Fanny and you fallen out over your spelling ? "

" Yes ; and that must decide it."

" Louie, I think those Spelling Bees are a most dreadful waste of time. People only try to catch each other with words they never want."

That was the duke's opinion.

" That is quite a trifle. Caroline, you'll come ? "

Fanny drove home from Bolton lighter in heart than she had come ; a confession given is a burden shifted from one's own shoulders to another's.

But Lady Kirkcudbright was annoyed and distrustful.

" What a bore she is with her Spelling Bees," said she.

## CHAPTER VI.

ALL alone together, and face to face.

Julius stood looking down upon her, eager, unsatisfied, wondering ; and Lady Fanny made a pattern upon the road with the point of her boot, because she did not know what else to do.

There was a thick fog ; it shrouded them effectually, and beyond the charmed circle of two or three yards within which they stood, nothing could be distinguished.

They were in a narrow lane ; the fog

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hung on the hedges on either side; it made rows of diamonds on the bare brown twigs; it wove silver threads on the cobwebs spread between the blackberry leaves; it lifted now and again to show the sheepfold in the turnip field beyond; and it hung itself on to Julius's moustache as he stood there gazing at Fanny.

The meeting was one of mere chance. Otherwise, surely it had never happened. Had there been no fog, Julius surely would have jumped the hedge into the sheepfold sooner than meet Lady Fanny FitzMorris. Had Lady Fanny but known that Julius was coming down that lane, she would never have turned up it. Anything rather than meet him all alone with no one by, considering all that had happened.

But now that it had come how nice it

have to go groping about, masking this feeling of ours, turning this word of his or hers inside out to get to the sense of it, dropping just the very words ourselves that we do not mean, because some one else is listening, but wondering, longing, seeking for the reality all the time !

It had happened thus :

Julius, walking along sharply, swinging his stick, and not thinking of anything in particular, except the strange density of the fog, which shut him up in a little world of his own as he walked, to the utter exclusion of anything he had just passed, suddenly heard voices in front of him.

And then all at once out of the fog had sprung Lady Fanny.

Lady Fanny wheeling a wheelbarrow, and a poor old woman walking beside her ; a rake and a hoe were laid across the barrow.

Lady Fanny, having once distinguished who it was bearing down upon her, and seeing, too, that there was no possible escape, first blushed painfully, then she laughed—a forced laugh—and then she stopped in her walk, but she did not leave go of the barrow.

“Lady Fanny FitzMorris ! ” exclaimed Julius, a light breaking over his face, as if now he saw his way at last out of a great difficulty.

To Lady Fanny’s unutterable satisfaction, the objectionable hat had come off with a short, sharp, jerky movement.

“Oh, Mr. Hawkshaw, is it you ? What must you think of me ? ”

I should soon ha' got on again."

"Mrs. Brown's husband was taken very bad suddenly with rheumatism, and had to go home; and she was afraid some one might fall in love with the barrow."

"It belongs to the road, you see, sir."

"And so she came to fetch it."

While Fanny was talking so fast, Julius had come beside her, and laid his hand on the barrow. But Fanny still held fast.

But it was too heavy for her to wheel up this steep hill.

"I am sure you don't know what to think of me. Really, Mr. Hawkshaw, I can wheel it perfectly."

"I am sure you can," said he, smiling.

But, at the same time, his quiet gaze disarmed her, and she resigned her pos-

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session of the barrow into his hands,  
walking meekly beside him.

“ I did not think I should meet anybody ; I am so sorry.”

So Julius took the wheelbarrow and wheeled it, and Fanny and the old woman walked on either side of him.

“ My poor man is bad indeed ; it’s not the rheumatics alone, but it’s what they call the new algia as well, I think. He be bad, dear heart alive, that he be.”

“ Does he have the doctor ? ”

“ Oh yes ; but it be very expendious, that it be. Ah, I have had a hard time of it, take it all in all. Left a widder with seven little children, and tramping the country to find work for ‘em and for me, from Somersetshire to Bucks. I cum from Bucks, you see, so I knew I could find friends an’ work there. And I

'em all up to work, like my mother before me. And then I married Brown."

"This is your cottage, isn't it, Mrs. Brown?"

"Yes, my lady—that it be. And thank you, kindly, and you, sir, too, I'm sure. Brown has always lived here, and his father before him."

"Ah, really, has he?"

"I never knew my father, I didn't; he was pressed, and it was twenty or thirty pounds in them times to get a substitute. Two children saved a man, but my brother wasn't born then, only me. So, off father went; I never knew him."

"Well, good-bye, Mrs. Brown. I must come again another day."

"Good-bye, my lady, and to you, sir, too, I'm sure."

So, the wheelbarrow set down, they had turned away together, and once away from the cover of the garrulous old woman's tongue, a strange silence had fallen upon them.

And yet stolen glances at each other's faces, had told each that neither was cross, or very cold. If only some slightest word could be spoken——

Julius was determined that it should be spoken.

"Lady Fanny," said he; almost whispering.

She stopped, and he faced her.

The fog made them feel strangely, utterly alone.

"Yes."

What could he do? An ill-chosen word

offer her in token of penitence.

While he was waiting, deeply thinking, she looked up at him half smiling, half in doubt whether she might smile. And then she met a smile to the full as doubtful as hers.

How did they end, these two very hesitating smiles? Have you ever seen the sun come out after a rainy day, and light up first the distant trees, and then the bank of hill opposite, and then come sweeping over here to your very feet, till you stand in a blaze of glory?

The smiles ended something like that.

Or, have you seen the sea, where storm and wind and white foam have raged; where men have been dashed into eternity, wrecked even in sight of land, and then,

next morning, have you seen it—calm, placid, beautiful—shimmering away in the golden sunlight ?

Somehow like that those trembling smiles ended.

“ I thought there had been a fog, a heavy cloud over the earth,” said Julius, “ but I don’t feel it now.”

Low soft laughter from Lady Fanny answered him.

He put out his hand.

“ We have been very unfriendly of late,” said Lady Fanny, putting hers into it. “ Was it my fault—say ? ”

“ I do not know : tell me.”

“ I thought—I thought—— ”

“ What did you think ? ”

She could not say that she thought he had hated her, because now it was proved

"I heard all sorts of things about you."

"But you did not believe them."

"Should I not?"

"No, no, no."

"Very well."

"Did you believe them?"

"So many people are saying it. I did partly believe that you were going to marry Lord Swansea."

"You must never believe anything you hear."

"I may believe in you. Tell me that."

"I don't suppose you will, for ever so long. It strikes me that nobody believes in anybody nowadays, and that just the people one wants to believe in one more

than anybody else, believe in one least of all."

"But you and I might believe in each other if you would let me."

"Ah!" she was leaning over a gate now, looking at as many of the sheep as the fog would let her see, "if we might."

"What is there to hinder us?"

"Yourself first; you are different from me. You can never——"

"Let me try."

She was going to tell him that she was true, that she was sincere, that she worshipped realities not appearances, that her standard of honesty reached and penetrated to the very essence and inmost springs of action and of daily life, but the tone in which he said—"Let me try," stopped her. She could not now cut herself off apart from every one else, an

earnestly.

“ Shall we see if we cannot understand each other a little better in future ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ May I see you home now ? No ! All right, don’t let us quarrel again. I understand——”

“ You will always say so now, I dare say, whether you do or not.”

“ I should not wonder if I did, only——”

“ Only what ? ”

“ You will explain sometimes ? ”

She laughed in spite of herself.

How long they stayed talking they did not know. But good-bye came at last.

“ When shall we meet again.”

“ Out hunting—now—perhaps,” said she gravely.

“ Ah, yes ! now, perhaps. I am so glad.”

The gladness referred more to the reconciliation made than to all the hunting in the world.

By the time Lady Fanny reached Kirkcudbright she understood it so too.



## CHAPTER VII.

LORD DALTON had dined at the Priory twice.

Invited by Julius, and indebted to him as he was, it had seemed to Dalton that it was impossible to decline.

The first time the Camelfords had been there, also an Oxford friend of Julius, and Dalton had not minded it. Moll had sung, and he had found himself interested in Mr. Hawkshaw, senior.

The next time there had been no one but himself. He had been somewhat

wearied by the unctuous flattery with which Mrs. Hawkshaw and Moll had loaded him during dinner—afterwards the father and son together. The contrasts they presented, and yet their close relationship so often and so suddenly appearing, amused him; and, after that, when Moll had sung two or three songs, and by some chance he was left alone with her in the music-room, he had been amused by her still more.

As he walked home, thinking over Moll's smiles and flatteries, chance hints lately dropped by his mother with reference to an heiress being a prompt necessity, recurred to him uncomfortably. Then Hawkshaw, senior—sharp, shrewd, proud of his industry and of his accumulated wealth—rose before his mental vision. Would he sacrifice his daughter

suffering from his impecuniosity, surely he would desire no such return on Dalton's part for his hospitality. Surely he would be likely rather to hold him up before the eyes of his family as a pauper patrician, idle, dishonourable, and helpless !

Those men are so proud of their power, said Dalton to himself spitefully, and laugh at a poor dog who has not the chance of turning an honest penny. But, again, would Moll be sacrificed? She had been very pleasant to him—very pleasant indeed ; but, after all, hundreds of girls are most wonderfully pleasant, and they mean nothing at all by it. The only thing was that Mrs.

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Hawkshaw herself was so extremely pleasant, too. That generally does mean something. Perhaps, after all, these people, having toiled and delved and spun for so long, were now ambitious for something in return for their labours. Perhaps their dream was to annihilate the distinction of class, and in exchange for wealth they would take position. Perhaps Moll did like him: Moll might not have seen many gentlemen—many guardsmen. Guardsmen, Dalton thought, were different—were a trifle above any other men on the face of the earth!

“Something must be done,” said he to himself; “they must be asked to Kirkcudbright; we must be very civil to the whole of them. I am not prepared to marry Moll; but we must be awfully civil, because of that confounded loan.

Dimly, but unpleasantly, Dalton became conscious of a tale written by Trollope, he fancied, which had made much impression on him at the time, of a young man pressed by his tailor to marry his daughter. Dalton remembered a certain scene of tea in the garden: the girl wasn't bad—her name was Polly; not so very unlike Molly—but the father was not desirable. There had been a long bill in the case; and the circumstances—dinner, *tête-à-tête* afterwards—were not so unlike that he should not recur to them with alarm. Only there had been a rival in the fictitious young man's case, a stump orator, Moggs, or some name like this. Dalton had seen no shadow of a

rival at the Priory. His undisputed welcome was, if possible, more alarming than the neighbourhood of the oratorical shoemaker. He wished to goodness there was a Moggs somewhere near!

He was playing billiards with Fanny as he was thinking of Moggs, and the wish for Moggs spoilt his stroke. This was after Fanny's reconciliation with Julius, be it understood; and this Fanny was a very different person from the Fanny who had been left at home when Dalton went over to the second dinner at the Priory. There had been clouds, doubt, a strange feeling of limpness and of being depreciated and sat upon, about Fanny FitzMorris; now she is once more as bright and as brisk as ever, as self-confident, as hopeful. Life and she are on good terms again. Lord Swansea even

get up till she said she would have him. Well, he need never get up, if he preferred it, for she certainly would never say she would have him now. Happiness has much to do in guiding the barometer of our moral courage; for, certainly, a few weeks ago she would never have dared to be so firm. And it was valour undoubtedly her own, for she had not seen Kate; there had been no good advice, no lessons about truth, or of being true to herself; it was a burst of youthful nature, springing from happiness and from enthusiasm for all that is good and pure—a sort of proud self-reinstatement in self-respect and self-approval.

“I say, Fan, I think we ought to ask

the Hawkshaws to dinner," said Dalton, as he spoilt his stroke by wishing inordinately for Moggs.

"What, all of them?"

"Yes."

"I don't see how that might be possible."

"They have had me twice."

"Yes; but you went."

"You see, I am not quite sure that they are people to be trifled with."

Fanny knew nothing of the £500, nothing of Moll; she only knew that Julius would be just the same whether he were asked to dinner or not.

"Oh no, I dare say not. But who is trifling with them, Dalton?"

"Oh well, I hardly meant that. But—I mean—I think, that they won't stand much snubbing. You like them, don't you, Fan?"

“The thing is, I don’t quite know now what vulgarity is: I suppose it is just trying to be what you are not.”

“The Hawkshaws are not that, certainly; they are candid enough.”

“Yes. They want h’s too, but, except that, I don’t know that they are half so vulgar as Lady Castletree and her daughters, or Mrs. Camelford, who think themselves too great to speak to half the world. I think good breeding is shown by being civil at least to every one you have to meet.”

“You used to think, Fan, that people you did not meet in London society were not worth speaking to?”

“Well!—but then I was brought up

so ; besides people do ask so much—Who is she? or, Who is he?—and if the answer is not prompt and satisfactory, then he or she is tabooed at once. There are lots of nobodies who are ever so much better fun than the somebodies, I think.”

Dalton smiled.

“ Don’t go too far, Fan.”

“ Oh, I’m not disrespectful to my friends. I only mean that one does get sick of the girls at Prince’s and the young men at balls and at five o’clock teas, and the eagle-eyed mammas and papas. There is nobody sporting nowadays. I like good jolly people who enjoy things.”

“ Oh, come ; I can find you plenty of good jolly fellows who enjoy things.”

“ Ah, yes, your nasty, fast, stupid young swells, or horrid old ones.”

of getting out of debt by getting deeper into it."

" You are not altogether wrong, Fan ; but I don't think these sweeping condemnations are quite just, or quite the right thing for you to say."

" I suppose to you, Dalton, when you are getting so beaten at billiards as you are now, I may say what I like. What is your miserable score now ? "

Just then Lady Kirkcudbright came in, holding an open note in her hand.

" What do you think, Fanny ? I have just heard from Bolton, and that tiresome Louisa wants me to have the Spelling Bee. She says the duke does not care about it, and that she has not got enough

neighbourhood there. What shall I say?"

"Oh, you must have it, mother. Score five for me, Fan, for that."

"Why, Dalton, only last night you said you knew no greater bore than this spelling and pronouncing mania."

"I hated to have to go all the way to Bolton for it; and education does spoil the pleasure of writing and talking altogether. We shan't be able to do or say anything soon. It won't be safe to send a note asking a man to dinner."

"One must get them printed," suggested Fanny.

"Yes, and I'll take pretty good care that mine are signed as the printer's handiwork—not mine. I won't have the responsibility."

"What am I to do, children?"

“But the duchess wishes it.”

“I don’t know that I care so much what Louisa wishes.”

“Oh no, but one likes to please her, she is so good to us.”

“And then she sends me a list of who I am to ask, and that always drives me wild.”

“Who does she want asked?”

“Why, those Hawkshaws! Why are they to come to our Spelling Bee? It is admitting them to intimacy at once.”

“Oh, you’d better have them, mother.”

So spoke Dalton, intent on his stroke, and his mother stood there silent, watching—now his face, now Fanny’s.

Was there really any question of money

between him and Julius, as Swansea had hinted? If so, it behoved her to be civil to all of them, even to the mother. It was the only way she could befriend her boy.

But, on the other hand, did Julius want to marry Fanny? Would Fanny—lovely Fanny—the beauty of two seasons, ever listen to such a proposal? Alas! Lady Kirkcudbright had her doubts. She could not sacrifice her daughter and her dearest hopes in this way. Suddenly an idea struck her—she might have Swansea, too! She could ask him down if she had the Spelling Bee. It would be an occurrence and an opportunity. In a country house an occurrence is needed for an opportunity.

And then, would Dalton marry the girl?

the merrier."

"The father and the mother and the son and the daughter."

"The young man will not care about it, I should think."

"No, very likely not; but still you cannot leave him out."

"Do you like the girl, Dalton?"

"Fine girl, mother."

"Yes. Good eyes?"

"Very."

"She sings too, I believe."

"Yes. Fine girl."

After all, they were rich. They might lend Dalton money and help him, perhaps, if they had not done so already, and the girl was worth trying for. Dalton

did think her a fine girl, you see. It was at least two affirmatives to one negative, and the negative might be cancelled by Lord Swansea's presence.

So Lady Kirkcudbright turned away, carefully shut the billiard-room door, and proceeded to write her notes in meek obedience to the duchess.

The note, duly dispatched to the Priory, was the reason why Mr. Hawkshaw, senior, might have been seen in a remote corner of the library during the small hours of the night, investigating many ponderous tomes by the light of a lamp. Each bee was to contribute three words, and Mr. Hawkshaw was busy seeking for his contribution.

"I have been a bee all my life," said he excitedly to himself, disregarding the perspiration that stood on his brow, and

been a bee all my life, and if I don't manage to catch some of these butterflies in my honey, it will go hard with me indeed."

"That's it—that will do 'em—'rays'—three meanings; that's my key. I generally has—we business men generally do have—a key to open everything. No good fumbling about the cupboard without. Why, you may fumble for ever. But find the key and the doors fly open at once. Here's another. Why, I'm gettin' on."

"Good-night, father," said Julius, looking in.

"Good-night, Ju ; I say—' Whole,' eh ? That'll do 'em, won't it ? "

"H-o-l-e," said Julius, doubtfully.

"That ain't it, my boy," said his father chuckling triumphantly.

"W-h-o-l-e," suggested Julius.

"Ay! That's right," answered he gravely. "I must find something else. Don't wait. I shall do it."

Julius, repenting the sudden blow he had given his father, withdrew.

But Mr. Hawkshaw only returned to the tomes with renewed zest.



## CHAPTER VIII.

To a curious and unimpassioned observer of human nature, aware of the different impulses moving each mind, the party that assembled for the Spelling Bee at Kirkcudbright might have been an interesting sight.

Lady Kirkcudbright, universally urbane and courteous, had received them all ; the duchess, standing at her elbow, somewhat nervous and eager, had helped her. She had driven over to luncheon, bringing with her a huge dictionary, the duke, and a Mr. Spiegel, a clever friend of the

duke, who was to act as umpire during the proceedings. When she saw Lord Swansea, who had come down the night before, she smiled and put out her hand to him ; then turned immediately to Lady Kirkcudbright, with an ominous frown, and asked—

“ Why did you ask the old fellow with the boots ? He can’t spell.”

Now, none of them had ever seen a Spelling Bee before ; the duchess and Fanny, guided only by their own imaginations, had undertaken the management of this one.

“ Let us do it like they have the mental arithmetic at schools,” said Fanny. “ Whoever spells best goes up to the top.”

“ The one who spells worst can have my dictionary,” said the duchess.

those who imagined they might spell worst at the top, that they might add to the amusement by having continually to go down lower.

Mr. Spiegel sat at a table covered with papers; three large dictionaries, among which the duchess's was conspicuous, were in front of him; the rest of the party branched off from him in a long line reaching nearly to the end of the room.

The duchess found herself seated quite at the bottom of the class.

Lady Kirkcudbright was about the centre; Mr. Hawkshaw, senior, was just above her—he was all anxiety and eagerness; Lady Kirkcudbright could hardly refrain from showing the dislike she felt

towards him. The duke was below her—he was as quiet as a mouse, with just a twinkle of merriment on his face ; beside him was Alice, and on the other side sat Miss Rosanna Weatherwax, a friend of Mr. Camelford—rumour said she was his first love ; however that may be, she has now long passed her first bloom, and Mrs. Camelford need have no sort of anxiety on her score. She grew by turns red and white, partly at being seated next a duke, and partly at the thought that she might have to raise her voice in public, or risk being sent to the bottom of the class—a terrible degradation for a lone gentlewoman. Mrs. Camelford seems to be thinking of nothing but her clothes ; Mrs. Hawkshaw is seated next to her, and so overshadows her that Mrs. Camelford cannot manage to show some very

with Katie on the other side of him ; he has hardly spoken to Fanny, but he is watching her carefully. It is not a wise occupation, and he knows it ; so many eyes are on him, and his own eyes drink in sweet poison as he looks.

Since that meeting in the fog, there have been chance passings, rare looks, chance words in the hunting field, light phrases that perhaps meant nothing, swift flashes of colour, glimpses of smiles ; and then—at first, subtle, unconscious, involuntary—a sweet hope began to creep into his life with regard to Fanny ; now it gains force every day. At first, was it a dream ?—dim, vague, untenable, impossible, but infinitely sweet as all such

dreams are—ay, so sweet it cannot be let go—he must dwell on it yet a little longer; and, so dwelling on it, the colours gain depth, the lines take firmness, there comes a change over it—it is no longer a dim ideal, it becomes possible, it might be a reality. Once reached this stage, was it likely to be soon eradicated from his life ?

But Lord Swansea is seated now next to Fanny; he dares not look too often. Julius trusts her now; he would not fear an army of peers; with no such glamour as that will she be tempted! Yet . . . he wishes he were sitting by her now, instead of Lord Swansea.

Mr. Camelford is at the top, next to Lord Kirkcudbright, with Moll, and Miss Gauntlet, another lady who had also passed her youth; she lives just beyond

after him Dick. They are bent on being sent down to the bottom soon. Dick wants to go and shoot pigeons.

“It has been arranged, I think,” said Mr. Spiegel, looking down the line as if he were afraid of it, and could never get right to the end, “that we should spell in rotation, and that whoever spells best should pass the other competitors over whom he has triumphed, and come up to the top.”

“Hear, hear,” said Dick and Dalton, stamping with their feet.

“Hear, hear,” said Mr. Hawkshaw.  
“So far, so good—hunderstood.”

“Every competitor has, I think,” continued Mr. Spiegel, appealing timidly to the duchess, and laying his hand lightly

over the papers as though he would bless them, "every competitor has, I think, contributed three words. The person whose words they are should maintain silence when they are given out."

"Dear me, that is very nice," hazarded Miss Rosanna Weatherwax, but, getting no response while Mr. Spiegel sought among the papers, she felt snubbed, and wished the earth would open and swallow her up.

"Borough?" said Mr. Spiegel, elevating his voice and his eyebrows. "Signed 'Elephant.' "

"'Helephant!'-that's me," exclaimed Mr. Hawkshaw, sitting very forward and clapping his hands on his knees.

"Hush, my dear sir. You needn't say so."

"Oh, beg pardon. I thought you'd

“B-o-r-o-u-g-h,” said everybody.

“Wrong,” said Mr. Hawkshaw triumphantly.

“Eh?” asked the duke mildly, turning to him.

“Hush, my dear sir. It’s for me to tell them.”

“But it’s wrong, sir!”

“Well, you have put ‘burgh,’ I’ll allow. I must look in the dictionary. Your authority is——?”

“B-u-r-g-h-e-r, citizen, is burgher, sir,” said Mr. Hawkshaw, “so it stands to reason that b-u-r-g-h, city, must be burgh, too. Humph!”

“Is that so, Spiegel?” asked the duke doubtfully.

“Stenzler has it b-o-r-o-u-g-h, Fox has

it b-u-r-g-h, Searchwell has it b-u-r-g-h,  
Petty has it b-o-r-o-u-g-h."

"Louisa," said the duke, leaning forward and adjusting his eyeglass as he looked at the duchess, "did I not explain to you that these Spelling Bees are foolish things?"

"I fancy the older writers have it 'b-u-r-g-h,'" continued Mr. Spiegel; "the modern ones insert the *o* and the *u*."

"And yet I'm a modern man, sir," said Mr. Hawkshaw. "I'm all for progress."

"Undoubtedly you are, sir," said Lord Swansea. "Your dictionary is by Newman, I should think, and your grammar by No-man."

Fortunately, Mr. Hawkshaw did not hear the grammatical insult.

"My dictionary is by Strange, sir."

“A pity you came all the way from London, Lord Swansea, if you cannot teach your country friends to spell without quarrelling,” said Fanny angrily.

“I beg your pardon.”

“Oh, it does not matter to me.”

“Am I forgiven?”

“That is too great a word for such a mere breach of manners,” returned she, looking away.

A breach of manners! A belted earl of one of the oldest families of England to be told that by a mere girl, of his conduct towards an old pill-merchant!

“Really, Lady Fanny——”

“Auricle?” gave out Mr. Spiegel.

“O-r-a-c-l-e,” said everybody else.

“Dun ‘em! That’s dun ‘em again!”

exclaimed Mr. Hawkshaw. "Thought it would."

"Wrong! Hush, my dear sir," entreated Mr. Spiegel.

"Peter, will you hold your tongue?" exclaimed Mrs. Hawkshaw.

"You see it sounds different to what it's spelt. Thought it would do 'em."

The duchess put her hand up.

Mr. Spiegel bowed and smiled.

"Her Grace has the speaker's ear," said Lord Kirkcudbright.

"A-u-r-i-c-l-e," said the duchess.

"Right, right as a trivet! Your Grace has dun 'em hall. Step up to the top!"

"Oh, pa, you shouldn't talk for ever," said Moll.

"Hospital?" called Mr. Spiegel, evidently himself puzzled at the facility of the word.

heard it amazed.

“ Well now—that’s odd ; very odd.”

“ Don’t you expect us to spell anything at all, Mr. Hawkshaw ? ” asked Mr. Camelford.

“ Hold your tongue, Peter,” said Mrs. Hawkshaw.

“ Yes. But now that is odd, for it is pronounced quite differently from what you say it. I shan’t be quiet, my dear ! ”

“ How do you pronounce it, Mr. Hawkshaw ? ” asked Lady Kirkcudbright severely.

“ Why, ma’am, ‘orspital, of course ; and a ’orse is a different thing from a ‘oss—leastways, it ought to be.”

“ We say hos,” said the duke, looking a mild rebuke towards Fanny and Alice,

who were indulging in smiles, and towards Dalton and Moll, who were having a playful passage of arms about “plumb” and “plum.”

“But I was always taught to say ‘ors; like one says ‘umble, or gentlemanlike, or anything else as one says contrary to what one writes it.”

“Ah, really ! ”

“I see,” said Dalton gravely. “Go on, if you please, Mr. Spiegel.”

“Now attend, Peter.”

After that, this assemblage of grown-up people became too much like a game called “Post,” which the children play (so rapid were the changes of place), for us to follow it in detail. Mr. Hawkshaw and Mrs. Camelford were heard arguing hotly about “rein” and “rain ;” “Do be quiet, Peter!” in a certain well-known bass voice,

a wandering, and "peroration," to the discomfiture of Moll; poor Miss Weather-wax flitted about from seat to seat with much perturbation of spirit. "Reel" and "tail," "ruff" and "sale," did much for Miss Gauntlet, and "broccoli" was a lasting feather in Mrs. Hawkshaw's cap.

The strife of tongues, the heated arguments, the startling differences of opinion between the competitors and between his three huge dictionaries, more than occupied poor gentle Mr. Spiegel. The combativeness of Mr. Hawkshaw was the last straw that threatened to break his back, though shared to the full by Julius, who was longing, as with a sickness of the soul, that some pressing call of business might have kept his father

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in the City, just for that day, and that he might have been spared these pangs of shame. The suppressed laughter over the words “asperate” to make rough, and “aspire,” to sound the *h*, was bitter; almost more bitter was it, when Mr. Hawkshaw, triumphing at “poller,” a voter, to the annihilation of “polar,” “pole,” and “poll,” passed the duchess, and sat, radiant with smiles, at the top of them all. Till then aggressive, he was now utterly irrepressible. But Fanny passed him at the word “asparagus,” and Julius passed at the almost unknown word “wey”—a measure of corn; and then, Lord Swansea and his father quite forgotten, once enthroned there by her side, he was content. Alas! short triumph! Love-making and spelling can hardly succeed together; first Julius stumbled

ner;" and, finally, having fallen lower and lower over "pumice" and "anice," over the verbs "to pur" and "to whet," "apophthegm" crushed them, and the duchess, to her great satisfaction, saw them both go down to the bottom together, whence she knew they would never rise.

How capricious is fortune! Lord Swansea's star had been steadily on the ascendant. Now—strange fate!—his triumph is cut short, and he is shambling down—patent leather boots being tight to-day—even to below Julius. From where he sits he can hear all that Julius and Fanny say. Lady Kirkcudbright smiles as he passes her, but he fancies the duchess has a frown on her brow, and not even the condescension to pity him.

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But he had been unwary.

“ Sow,” then said Mr. Spiegel.

“ S-e-w,” said Fanny.

“ Wrong,” said Mr. Spiegel.

“ S-o-w,” said Lord Swansea.

Up once more! He sinks with ready ease and unctuous smile on to the sofa by her side. There was no answering welcome on Lady Fanny’s face for him.

“ Vein,” calls Mr. Spiegel.

“ V-a-n-e,” says Mr. Hawkshaw.

“ V-a-i-n,” says the duchess.

“ V-e-i-n,” calls out Julius.

“ Right!” says Mr. Spiegel.

And down they both come to the bottom, the duchess sitting by Julius.

“ Why does the duchess talk to the old man so much ? ” grumbled Lord Swansea to himself. “ Am I never to get a word with Fanny ? ”

“ Yes, I like it too.”

“ I am glad now I came to-day.”

“ I thought you would.”

“ You may always be sure that I will do anything that I think may please you.”

“ You are not spelling, Lady Fanny,” put in Lord Swansea.

“ I, oh—‘ Choir.’ C-h-o-i-r.”

“ Q-u-i-r-e,” said Lord Swansea.

“ Wrong,” said Mr. Spiegel. “ Lady Fanny, go up one.”

So Fanny had to change, and Lord Swansea sat beside Julius, and was the barrier between them he had so desired to be.

“ An amusing game, is it not?” said he politely to Julius.

“ Very, indeed,” answered Julius.

But when things are at their worst they mend, and Fanny was soon let out of her durance vile, by Mr. Spiegel declaring that that was all.

“And the prize,” he added, “as in some other races of which we have heard, is to be given to the last in. Mr. Hawkshaw, senior, he continued, rising as he spoke, with the huge dictionary in his hands, “allow me to present you with this magnificent volume, occupying, as you do, the lowest seat at this meeting.”

Applause, and “Hear, hear!”

“I should be ashamed, Peter, that I should! A man of your age, too!”

“If pa hadn’t talked so much, he’d have spelt ever so much better,” suggested Moll.

“Dear me, dear me, how very funny,” said Miss Weatherwax.

“Oh, Peter, how could you !” exclaimed Mrs. Hawkshaw, suffering from a second burst of indignation.

“ Well, my dear,” said he, as he tripped up to the table, laughing and rubbing his hands, “ every position has its advantages. The last shall be first. Your Grace, I thank you heartily, I’m sure. Now, Liz and Moll, you’d better look out, I can tell you, for now I have the Duchess of Arranmore’s own dictionary, I can set you all to rights.”

Later, when Fanny had poured out the tea and everyone had been waited upon, when, too, they had scattered themselves about the drawing-room in different groups, she found herself standing looking

out of the window, and Julius stood beside her.

The window was in an embrasure, there was a flower-stand in the centre of it, and the curtains there partly hid them from the rest; Fanny thought they were quite unnoticed.

Julius was in a state of supreme doubt; he longed for some proof by which he might know her feeling towards him. Sometimes he thought she was merely a coquette, at other times a grave sad shy look that stole out of her eyes banished swiftly such unworthy thought, and now he was longing for some means by which he could put the truth of that look to the test.

"The days are so short," said she, looking out to the dim grey sky.

She was plucking a flower to pieces

he. "Do you ever look forward, Lady Fanny?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I wondered. You seem so gay, so thoughtless, so merry; and then, at times . . ."

"Well?"

"Sometimes you are so earnest, so—"

"You know you said you would never misunderstand me again," said she softly, half in play.

"Give me something then to understand you by," said he passionately. "I am trusting you. I would do anything for you. Is it to be all for nothing? Would you fling me and my service away as you do that poor flower?"

For, in a sudden terror as she turned to him, stung and half frightened by his words, she had let the flower fall. In moving her arm, too, a bracelet dropped:

Their eyes met; neither thought of the bracelet. What could she say? How much dared she say? To whom was she to be true?—to her mother, to Julius, or to herself?

But an eager longing to be able unreservedly to trust some one, to be able, once for all, to be true, nearly overcame her. She smiled for a moment and their fingers met.

Then, in the confusion of withdrawing those too willing hands, Fanny bethought herself of the bracelet.

“ It fell somewhere there.”

Julius stooped to look for it, and put it into her hands.

That too was found.

"A little golden heart," mused he, playing with it for a moment, and his thoughts recurring to the test he had longed for—"how pretty! I wish it were mine."

He looked at her earnestly.

"Would you lend it me for a little? It is of chased, refined gold, I see. A living heart almost, it seems to me."

"Take it," said she.

Was that the wind outside? It sounded like a note dwelling on the ear, delicious in its sweetness, lengthening out the bliss of this moment.

"I would return it if ever you wanted it again."

"I shall not want it again."

“Lady Kirkcudbright,” said Lord Swansea, striding across the room, and standing before her, while he pulled his well-waxed moustache viciously; “when a man is thinking of marrying, he does not care to see his future wife making herself remarkable with any sort of snob.”

“My goodness!” said Lady Kirkcudbright. What a terrible old man he looked all in a moment! A qualm crossed her that he might not be fit to be any woman’s husband. He looked able just now to tear her in pieces. Suppose, some day, her Fanny were to be torn in pieces by him.

“My goodness! Certainly not. What do you mean?—oh!” then she laughed. “You mistake! Fanny dear, come here. My daughter was only doing the civil, Lord Swansea.”

## CHAPTER IX.

LADY FANNY wanted to think over the afternoon's occurrences. After dinner, therefore, when her mother and sisters were in the drawing-room, she stole away to the conservatory, which, in honour of Lord Swansea was lighted up with Chinese lanterns. They gave a weird unearthly sort of light, making great broad shadows here, and great sudden flaring patches of light and colour there, setting off some of the flowers, and obscuring others. The large leaves,

unstirred by any breath, and the clusters of flowers, drooping as though silent, unemotional, almost dead, added to the enchantment. Fanny, as part of the silence, crept into a seat in a corner; the leaves overshadowed her; they seemed to share her anxieties, and to sympathise tenderly with her doubts.

What had she done and said in her haste? If, after all, Julius should be mocking her—should not care ;—if now he were laughing at his triumph ;—if he should care for somebody else more than for her! She had said, “Take the heart,” and again, when he had talked of it as a loan, she had said, “I shall not want it again.” People, Fanny now thought, should not let their feelings run away with them thus: it was dreadful! But yet again it was dreadful to feel

to give any expression to it ;—to eat up one's soul as it were in useless gnawing pain, to be always thrown back on one's self; never to be able to say one word or ask one question to end that supreme doubt;—to live on chance—chance looks, chance words, chance crumbs, and have to guide existence by them. A man may ask, thought Fanny, in a hundred ways; a woman can do nothing, and often mars her destiny by an oversight, or an assumption of strength she does not feel, or by the mask of coldness she thinks it right to put on, or by that proud indifferent familiarity by which she seems to ignore the existence of any deep feeling at all.

“Very likely he does not care for me

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the least bit in the world," said she to herself. "Men generally don't, when they say they do."

She remembered a certain young man, who had offered her, in thrilling language, his heart and a happy home, whom she had refused, and nine days after, his engagement to another young lady was announced: and she thought too of a young guardsman who had sat by her at a dinner, danced all night at a ball with her, come to call three days running, and the week after had informed her he had some news for her, which turned out to be his approaching marriage. She thought, too, of another, who was always writing, always signing himself "yours devotedly," always behaving as an ardent lover should do; but, meanwhile, she knew from good authority he was toiling

No. If Julius did not care, why then, no more did she. She could laugh and mock, and turn an afternoon's folly into a joke as well as he. But, they had been so different from that to each other—they had not thought of flirtation, they had been so quiet; he had always been so gentle to her except in that matter of the hat, but somehow she could not help fancying that Julius cared a little. And if he cared, why then, she had gone so far this afternoon, had been so nice to him that day in the fog, had been proud as it were, and so glad of his candour, that now she could never go back from it.

“ After all position was nothing, wealth was nothing, happiness was everything.”

She looked up and saw Lord Swansea standing in front of her.

Lord Kirkcudbright, coming in from the dining-room after the rest, had seen Lord Swansea wandering about the rooms disconsolately. As he himself passed the conservatory he saw Fanny in the corner.

“What is Fanny doing in the conservatory ? ” asked he aloud.

“Flowers,” said Katie, without looking up from her work.

Lord Swansea took the hint, and tripped off merrily.

“Do you think she will have him ? ” asked Lord Kirkcudbright of his wife, as he sank down wearily on the sofa beside her. There was an anxious, worn look on his face.

“I do not know. If you had asked

His wife was silent, and the girls' hearts beat as they pretended to busy themselves over their work. Dalton and Dick had not come in yet.

"Well, Lady Fanny," said Lord Swansea, as he stood in front of her, smiling and rubbing his eyeglass for something to do.

He tried a tone of disinterested friendship. He wanted to throw her off her guard; no good hurrying her if her foolish little head were full of some one else.

"Well, Lord Swansea."

She could not go away immediately. If she had been standing up, she might have said it was cold, or have proposed

going to the others. But she had unfortunately established herself so very comfortably she could not plead discomfort directly she saw Lord Swansea.

“ Why this solitary retreat ? ”

“ I was rather sleepy.”

“ Sleepy ! Why ? ”

“ Why ? I don’t know.”

“ One is not sleepy for nothing.”

“ Isn’t one ? ”

“ No. I thought something might be troubling you—perhaps.”

“ Me ? Oh, dear me, no ! ”

“ I am glad of that. It is lucky for me you were—sleepy.”

“ These flowers are oppressive, don’t you think, and make one feel heavy ? Shall we go away ? ”

“ Oh no, pray. By no means. I have so few opportunities of speaking to you.

“An amusing *passe-temps*. That vulgar old man was very funny. I suppose your mother had him because of your brother, else I could hardly have understood it ? ”

He knew Fanny knew nothing of Julius’s loan.

“Eh ? ”

“And for the same sisterly reason I suppose you were civil to the son ? ”

“I don’t understand you, Lord Swansea, really.”

“Or—good heavens ! is he the young man ? It has just dawned upon me ! ”

Now what was Fanny to say ? At present, she could not let Julius personate the fictitious young man whom a few

weeks ago she had represented to Lord Swansea as swaying her heart with his lightest wish; nor, on the other hand, could she say quite truly he was not a young man with any pretensions at all over that heart. Just now, the merest, the lightest word on the subject seemed forbidden to her—if it had not been the least true, then—but now it was all quite different, and the very difference made her aware how great the stake was to her. Then what did the obnoxious old fellow mean about her brother? She dared not tell another story about any other young man.

“What do you mean, Lord Swansea?”

“You were civil to him, very!”

“Very—I hope,” said Fanny, as though overcome by a sense of duty.

“Because of his kindness to your brother?”

from you? Then I, as a friend, your friend, will tell you in confidence that the young man has lent money to Dalton.”

“Did Dalton ask him?”

Fanny had started angrily, losing her self-control for a moment, and now her eyes flashed ominously. Why was she to suffer this? Was this the end of all her efforts that Julius should think well of her? She had been proud, unjustly proud, she saw it now, of her name and family and position. Why was it to be dragged through the mire thus? How Julius must have laughed at her—at them all! Kirkcudbright indeed!—and the eldest son living on his long-suffering!

“Men don’t lend money unless they are asked to do so!”

“ It is dreadful ! ”

She leaned back silent, turning away from Lord Swansea, hating him and Dalton especially—almost hating Julius at that moment.

Lord Swansea watched her.

“ How pretty you look when you are angry ! ” said he.

“ Can’t we pay it back ? ” said she suddenly. “ How much is it ? ”

“ Large sums, I fancy.”

“ Can’t we ever pay it back ? ” said she desperately.

“ If you will allow me . . . ” said he.

She got up from her chair, and stood in front of him. She hated him intensely. She preferred being indebted to Julius much, if indeed she must be indebted to anybody.

“ I think it will be better if you will

She only wanted him to be silent, smothered, as she had once said to the duchess, if that might be possible.

“ Certainly. You shall have the money,” said he with alacrity.

“ What ! ” exclaimed she, opening her eyes and facing him ; you misunderstood me. “ Am I to be bought and sold ? I won’t have your money ! Is this really an arrangement between you and Dalton ? You are quite capable of it, I dare say.”

“ You prefer being sold to the other one, do you, Lady Fanny ? ”

Lord Swansea looked very nasty when he was angry.

“ Ah ! ”

That was a side thrust indeed ! Was it true ? Had Dalton wished to sell her

to Julius? But Julius would never buy her. Inestimable comfort! Her doubts returned to her tenfold. He, Julius, did not care for her like that. A few eager words, a few tender looks, a flower, a glad reconciliation, a smile, a pressure of the hand; what were they? Alas! she might care for him, but he did not care for her like that.

“Rubbish!” said she triumphantly, standing there and laughing in Lord Swansea’s face; “he doesn’t care for me. He would not buy me.”

The old man was astonished at her sudden strength, and at the note of triumph in her voice.

“You would sooner be indebted to him than to me?” asked he bitterly.

“I am not a slave, to be bought and sold!”

In truth, he was losing his presence of mind ; she looked so handsome, so proud, so triumphant, in her wrath.

“ I prefer everything aboveboard, at least. Mr. Hawkshaw, at least . . . . If he has been kind to Dalton . . . Well, after all, if we are to bear such kindness, I *would* rather bear it from him than from you. There ; am I candid enough ? And now we are foes for ever, I suppose ? ”

She smiled as she spoke, and half put her hand out.

He bowed over it, took it, and kissed it, as it lightly lay for half a second in his.

“ Bravo—Swansea ! ” said a voice behind. It was Lord Dalton, who had just come to look after Fanny.

"I am nobody's foe," said Swansea hurriedly, in a low voice.

"Dalton, come here," said his sister, turning to him with a strange look of determination on her face.

"Why, Fanny, what's the matter?"

"Is it true that Julius Hawkshaw has lent you money?" She hoped to the last it was false.

An angry flush overspread the young man's face, and he came and stood beside her.

"It is true."

"Well, then, why," she went on, woman-like, turning like an animal at bay; only one more hope lost, only one more straw floated away; not much worse off, after all, than she had been before; "why, Lord Swansea, did you need to take it upon yourself to tell me so? Was

it to do with me if Dalton choose to borrow money of every friend he has in the world? or if Mr. Hawkshaw choose to lend him every penny he has in the world? Can I help it?—can I mend it?"

" You may remember, Lady Fanny, that I offered to mend it, if by so doing I could please you."

" But it would not please me at all. Now you have got back to your horrible buying and selling, I don't see why I'm to be dragged into these money matters between you and Dalton, at all."

" Come, Fanny."

" You certainly dislike me very much, Lady Fanny."

" I believe I do, Lord Swansea. I am not sure, if I had time to think, that I

ever disliked anybody in my whole life so much as I dislike you at this moment. Certainly I don't remember ever having been so angry in my whole life as I am at this moment—at least, not since I was a child, ever so long ago. Good-night, Lord Swansea."

"Won't you say, good-bye. I shall be gone before you come down in the morning. I only came down from town to see you."

She came back a step. She looked in both their faces. She was thinking more of herself and of her angry words than of either of them.

"Why doesn't somebody say something?" said she. "I have been very angry. I—am—very—sorry."

"It is not so very long ago since you were a child, Lady Fanny."

“I—am—ever—so—old, now. I ought to have known better. I hate being angry with any one. I hate quarrelling with any one. I don’t like you, but—good-bye.”

She put out her hand frankly.

Lord Swansea thought twice about it, and then he took it.

She went away.

“I was obliged to say—I don’t like you,” thought she to herself as she lit her candle, “or he might have fancied I would marry him after all. Men are so conceited. And I can’t take even him in.”

Her father came out of the drawing-room.

“Here!—shall I light your candle for you, Fanny?”

She looked at his face as he proceeded to do it, and then she found he was studying hers ; he looked tired and weary and anxious. Had he wanted her to marry Swansea ? Would he be terribly disappointed ? She would work, toil, slave all day at anything for him, but not that.

“ Poor father,” said she softly, and put her arm round his neck, as she waited for her kiss.

“ Little girl,” said he, touched ; “ be happy always—mind that.”

But she heard him sigh, as she turned away.



## CHAPTER X.

“I TELL you what, Liz, you had better just give him hup.”

Julius overheard his father saying this to his mother the next day after the Spelling Bee at Kirkcudbright ; Moll was standing at the window, thrumming indolently with both hands on the glass, with her back to both her parents. Julius was in a little ante-room that led to the drawing-room, looking over some books.

“But think of poor Moll.”

“I don’t suppose Moll will break her

heart ; or she's not the girl I take her to be."

" He is a very pleasant young man, father, I think."

" Moll has taken a great fancy to him, I assure you, Peter ; you can't rule those things."

" There's no accounting for tastes, certainly, Liz."

" No, Peter, there isn't ; for I'm sure if any one had told me when I was a young gal that I was ever going to marry you—but, there, there !—that's years ago now."

" And I was better looking then, Liz."

" You see, Peter, you speak about it on no authority at all."

" I told you that Ju told me it was no good our looking after Lord Dalton for Moll—he has other fish to fry."

world better nor you nor I now, Liz."

"Lord Dalton is always very civil to Moll, Peter."

"Yes, that he is, father."

"Yes, and you are mighty civil to him, I'll be bound. But, if you ask me, I don't see so much to take any one's fancy in him now."

"He is such a gentleman," said Moll.

"And such pretty ways," said Mrs. Hawkshaw.

"Then his eyes and his hands, father."

"Well, Moll, I haven't noticed his eyes and his hands as I knows of, but to my mind he ain't of much account."

"Why, father?"

"He's a reg'lar young rake as I take it, with not a bit of sense or gumption

in him. Can play the fine gentleman I don't make a doubt, and spend your money, if he got a chance, finely, but as to doing a stroke of work, or as to being the man to stave off an evil day, or to help one out of hard times, I'm much mistaken if he's the man for me."

"Lor', Peter, how you do talk."

"It's easy enough for such a one as him to be civil for half-hours together."

"I don't think we need give him up just yet, Moll," said Mrs. Hawkshaw in a lower tone.

"Now, Liz, don't go and let the girl fancy she's in love with him."

"But she is, I tell you."

"Easy enough to fall in love with a live lord, and dream of being a marchioness, and being called 'my lady.' But, I tell you what, I'm not going to

for him to spend, and just to fill his pockets. In my mind, that young man isn't worth his salt."

"Father, you don't know him at all, hardly."

"Let us have him over once more, Peter."

"You've 'ad 'im to tea once and to dinner twice. What more do you want to have him to?"

"We'll get Ju to have a dinner party."

"Ju's done nothing for me since I've been here," said Moll.

"I'll just take you both back to Tunbridge Wells—that's what I'll do. I'm not going to be let in in this way, that I'm not."

Then Mr. Hawkshaw departed, vio-

lently slamming the drawing-room door after him.

Julius got up too, and looked for his father, thinking he might like a walk, but not finding him, he strolled off by himself. In his heart he wished very much that his father would take his mother and sister off to Tunbridge Wells; their presence at the Priory was peculiarly tiresome to him just at present. His mind was made up now to try his fate with Lady Fanny; if she would not have him—well, were it not better to know the worst at once? This suspense was unbearable; and since yesterday he had dreamed, as realized, visions that hitherto had seemed utterly impossible.

Yes, there it was—he had it on his watch-chain—the little golden heart that she had let him take. He should always

knew he should never care for any woman again as he cared for her. When would the opportunity come? When could he speak to her again? When should he see her? As he thought this, he tossed his hair back from his brow, and strode forward excitedly—impetuously. He could not wait long: he must see her soon.

Perhaps now, this very afternoon, she was out somewhere close to him; watching the same clouds scurrying over the country, listening to the same gusts of wind southing through the trees, and carrying their messages through the world.

Suppose they were to meet suddenly, face to face, as they had already met once,

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twice before, what should he say to her? —what would be the words with which he would greet her? But his heart seemed to stand still, and to give him no words at all. And then he fell to thinking of those two meetings of theirs: the one when she had been on her pony, when she had not known him; and had been so proud, and had hated him; and the second time when she had been so sweet, so meek, when she had smiled in answer to him, and had blushed beneath his look, and had softly, in a hundred ways, with no word spoken, begged his pardon, and had also, as softly, though all in a fog, and on a cold dreary winter afternoon, taken his heart by storm, and held it now and ever since in her keeping. Little did he think at that first meeting, or at that second meeting, that the third would hold

cower from the knell it might ring for his heart's dearest hopes.

But—would she have him ?

Julius thought of his mother, his sister, his father. Oh, would she have him ? He lived alone, she need see next to nothing of them if she loved him ; ah, if she were worth anything, such reason as that would not make her deny him.

He walked on. Unconsciously he had come to the little green lane where he had been once in the early autumn, when he had vaulted over the railings, and then Fanny and Snail had come. Now, would they never come again ? He stood on the very place where he had stood beside her; he looked down the glade where she had

disappeared, half believing she must come again to-day ; he looked over the sloping park, watched the deer, and the silver thread of water in the valley. Oh, would she never come again ?

The bare branches, the dead leaves often stirred at his feet by the wind, seemed to give but a sad answer to his thought. Winter, decay, death, silence, seemed to surround him. How rear any warm bright hope therefrom ?

“ But if she love me ! ”

That was all.

That was the doubt, the fear, the hope — everything. Life itself seemed merged in that. It had come to that now, and if only the answer would come right then everything — sorrow, silence—could be borne, and took a different aspect in its light.

never could have known—never would have believed that he would come to this; never would have dreamed even that he would have loved any woman as now he loved Fanny FitzMorris; never thought he was ever going to ask any woman to marry him till he was forty or fifty at least—not Fanny FitzMorris certainly; never could have imagined that he could have stood a love-lorn figure in a wood, looking sentimentally at the stump of a tree because she had sat upon it some months ago.

This is how fate comes upon us ! And then they tell us we make our fates for ourselves. Fates made to order are dreary, dull, cross-grained, stiff sort of

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affairs. They do not come dancing down upon us, eager, gladsome, with ruby lips and diamond eyes, gay, airy, but impetuous, passionate, that will not be gainsaid. These are the fates that tempt a man, and hurl him along with them to happiness or to misery. At the beginning of the dance all looks fair, and did it not, he would go all the same.

Then Julius thought if Fanny were here now, on this very spot where he had first of all seen her, which was as it were hallowed to him by her presence, then he could tell her all about it. His very soul would go out to her, and he would so tell the tale, she must be won just by his very telling of it. How gracious, how sweet she seemed to him in his thought, listening to his earnestness; how very ineffably sweet she seemed to him in his thought

another.

To-morrow he must see her somehow ;  
to-morrow he would know his fate.

A turn in the road brought him outside Ivy Cottage. In front of it, with the rein tied to the gate-post, was a pony. It was Lady Fanny's pony, Snail.

And, inside the gate, standing on the plot of grass, was a girl.

It was Lady Fanny.

But to account for her standing solitary there, we must relate the day's history as it had happened to her.

Lord Swansea's vacant place at breakfast, and the cold averted looks of Lady Kirkcudbright brought down on Fanny's mind with sudden weight the sense of her great guilt.

She walked across the room under a feeling of injustice, and with a determination too to overcome the annoyance the rest of the family felt.

But the silence that fell on them as she entered, made her shiver, and a helpless feeling of impotence held her bound. After all, perhaps, they would have maintained her cause better if they could, but if the female head of the household is antagonistic, what can the rest do?

"Good morning, everybody," said Fanny, seeking for her old cheery tone; but it was forced, and a failure.

For a moment there was no response, and Fanny looked round, coldly astonished, as she leaned her hand on the back of her chair.

At last Lord Kirkcudbright said, but

Then Dalton and then Dick said—  
“Good morning.”

But in a sort of stifled way; and neither Lady Kirkcudbright, or Katie, or Alice said anything at all.

Then Fanny felt very much offended.

“ You seem to enjoy your breakfast very much to-day, Alice.”

In truth she never remembered seeing Alice so fully occupied with her bread-and-butter before.

“ I would not advise you to quarrel with your sisters, Fanny,” said Lady Kirkcudbright, in cold even tones. “ You quarrel quite enough with other people not to have too many friends to spare.”

“ I don’t want any friends, I’m sure,”

said Fanny, with a half sob in her voice, pushing her plate away. "I never had one who did me any good."

Dick signed to her to hold her tongue, and Dalton was at her elbow with her tea. He was kind in those sorts of ways.

"Hush! Fan; don't be silly."

"Silly—I'm not silly! It's all of you—just because that old idiot, Lord Swansea——"

But even Fanny, angry as she was, could not put her anger into fit words. A tear from her cheek rolled into her tea. She looked up to Dalton with comic dismay, like a child might, who has broken its toy.

"I must have another cup now, Dalton!"

Her brother saw her again at the moment as she was years ago in the

with tears, but looking up to his full of confidence. Happy days they were ; would they were here now instead of these hard, dull, weary ones. What tempests of rage those were, but how soon over ; and how comic they seemed seen through the vista of years. He smiled good-humouredly, in direct rebellion against his mother.

“ Oh ! so you want another cup now, Fan ? You won’t drink salt tears ? ”

“ No,” said she, quite gravely.

So he brought another cup, and the others looked on. But it was done in silence, and the rest of the meal passed off as silently ; and there was an oppression and discomfort weighing on them all.

Her mother evidently intended to send

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her to Coventry. All the morning, she took the other girls off with her ; there was no laughter, no smiles ; her company was not required, her tones fell like lead upon them.

Dalton and Dick were out, and poor Fanny was left alone. Her father was in the garden. She went out to find him.

“Am I to be forced to marry him, papa ?” said she, almost fiercely, standing in front of her father on the gravel walk and beginning thus abruptly, as she looked up into his face.

“No, Fanny, no !”

“The deed is done now. You might all make the best of it.”

“I don’t think you tried very much, did you ?”

“I always hated him.”

“ Father, have I done very wrong ? I am so sorry ! ”

Lord Kirkcudbright looked at her, reading her earnest face.

“ You are not worldly, Fanny.”

“ Father, does it matter to you ? That is what I want to know.”

But he would not answer.

“ Was there any money in the case, father ? ”

“ Why do you think that, Fanny ? ”

“ From something mamma hinted.”

“ I wish Caroline had held her tongue.”

“ Tell me, papa.”

“ It is done, isn’t it, Fanny ? I mean, nothing you could ever say would ever make him again—— ”

“ I should think not, papa. He *is* a gentleman, I believe.”

Lord Kirkcudbright took his cigar from between his lips, as if he were going to speak.

“Have I done very wrong, papa? It seemed to me to be right.”

“Not wrong, Fanny—not that, but it was the matter of a heavy debt, that was all; and he would have let me off if you had consented.”

“I am glad I did not know, papa,” said she, after a long pause. “I wonder what I should have done.”

“Is it too late now, Fanny?”

He asked it eagerly, like a gambler clutching at a last chance.

“Quite too late, father.”

An expression of pity, almost amounting to disgust, crossed her face.

“Why not let Kirkcudbright, and the London house too? I don’t care about

“Nor do I care to be publicly disgraced,  
Fan, thank you.”

“What can I do, papa? Are you all  
going to be unkind to me always? Is no  
one to speak? And are you going to  
believe all mamma says?”

“In time, I suppose, it will be all right.  
We don’t want to be unkind, but it has  
been a severe disappointment to your  
mother, Fan.”

After that they parted.

Luncheon was the same as breakfast.

No one seemed able to break the wall  
of ice which Lady Kirkcudbright had  
chosen to build round Fanny.

Later, when her mother and Katie were  
going out driving, Fanny saw her mother  
alone in the drawing-room.

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"Mother," said she, going up to her, "do forgive me."

"It is easy to say that, just after you have caused us all such pain."

Pain! Was she herself to go for nothing? Was she really wanted to offer herself up a holocaust for her family, and were her own sorrows and sacrifices to be of no account at all?

"I should have run away from him, I know; there would have been no end of a scandal," said she, viciously.

"I dare say you would."

"It was better to let him go off now by himself quietly."

"And meanwhile what am I and your father to do?"

"Let the London house, mother, eh?"

"Thank you. How selfish you are, Fanny, but I knew that before."

was aware of. But selfishness she did not know was one of them.

She watched the carriage drive off, feeling very bitter and very forlorn indeed.

Then she went to the stables, and Snail neighed.

So she had Snail saddled, and ran off to put on her habit. Perhaps she was selfish, very; there were two friends of hers, whom she had not been to see for a very long time, Mr. Lawley and Kate. She would go and beg forgiveness to-day.

Mr. Lawley was no favourite of Lady Kirkcudbright, and with regard to Kate, she was under a positive ban, ever since she had figured as Fanny's mysterious friend that evening at the Priory. Lady Kirkcudbright knew certainly nothing

about her, but she was aware that Fanny had found a protégée, and she had forbidden her to be seen with her any more.

But to-day Fanny was rebellious and wicked ; she would at least tell them why she had not been.

Mr. Lawley was sitting in his great arm-chair by the fire, with books and papers all round him. The sunny old man started forward to greet her, but he could not get up ; that ugly fall still kept him bound fast.

“ Ah, my Lady Fanny, you are good to come to see a crusty old invalid ; now come and sit down, and tell me all about it.”

Wonder of wonders, she did ; Fanny, so reserved to most people, did tell this old friend of hers all about it. He was old,

rankled in her heart the most bitterly.

“Selfish, my lady of sunshine! I think not, I think not, indeed.” But the good old man was sorely troubled for her. They were ugly fences for a young thing to get over all by itself, with never so much as a good firm hand to guide it.

“And is there no one, not one, in the world you could like, Lady Fanny, and who if he asked you like Lord Swans—sea——”

“No,” said Fanny, blushing ruby red, so bright a blush that Lawley felt his heart doubting her word, and wondering to himself already who the fortunate one could be. “I shall never marry.”

“Never is a long day,” said he, still

smiling, “and not for such as you to say. Some day he may come, and when you get on the right line, Lady Fanny, remember an old sportsman’s word—stick to it; stick to it through thick and thin.”

“There are doubles and turns sometimes,” said she, taking up his language.

“Never mind. It is there somewhere. Don’t change and get on a fresh fox; worth nothing. Stick to the right line; mark my words.”

“Stick to the right line,” thought she as she rode along by herself, towards Ivy Cottage. “As if a woman could always, dearly as she would love to do it.”

Then she jumped off the pony and tied him up, entered the garden, and—stopped short.

Door shut, window blinds down, as a house of the dead. A bit of dirty

Lady Fanny's heart sank within her.

Where was Kate? She had so longed  
to see her to-day. Lady Fanny turned  
and stood still—thinking.

There, in front, bearing down upon her,  
was Julius Hawkshaw.

No escape—no shelter.

She stood watching him.

Her colour went and came; her heart  
beat wildly. To-day of all days!

Every step brought him nearer.

Now, here he is!

They are close to one another, and  
their hands have met.

But they have found no word as yet,  
save, you know, that glad surprise which  
their tell-tale eyes told unconsciously to  
each other.



## CHAPTER XI.

"I CAME to see Kate," said Fanny, half apologising to Julius for being found thus by herself. "But look! the house is shut up, and she must have gone away."

"I thought I should see you somewhere to-day," said Julius, full of his own thoughts, and more candid in owning to them than Fanny was.

"Did you want to see me?" asked she, almost coquettishly.

"Yes."

Then Fanny remembered Lord Swansea's hints about Julius having lent

troubled. Julius must in his heart look upon her in a very different light from what she had formerly imagined. She felt almost afraid of him, and she felt ashamed for herself and for her family, that Dalton should have wanted the money.

"Where are you going to? May I come too?"

She did not know now whither she was going; Kirkcudbright was not pleasant just at present, and she did not want to go home a moment sooner than she was obliged.

Julius held his hand for her, and she sprang on to Snail's back.

For a moment he barred her progress.

"Do you remember the first time I ever saw you and Snail? You would not let me help you to mount that day."

"I did not know you then," murmured she.

But she wished he had not referred to that unlucky afternoon. After all, it was the best answer she could have made him, for it covered and claimed forgiveness for the many bitter words she had said that day. They had sometimes rankled since deeply in his mind, albeit said in such perfect innocence.

Then Julius took the rein, and led the unresisting pony.

"Where are you taking me?" asked she.

"Let me choose."

He undid the wicket gate that led into the Priory park, and the pony followed

afternoon," said he, standing by her side, and leaning his hand on the pony's mane,  
" I mean into the park."

" Have you ? "

Her face was bent down, and her voice  
was hardly audible. She was afraid. She  
had never seen him so determined before.

" I was looking for you."

" Were you ? "

It is so difficult to choose words when  
you are strongly excited and fear to show  
it. Julius had never felt so anxious in  
his life before to speak, or so little able to  
string the words together.

" I went just to the place where I saw  
you first. I thought you might come  
again. I went to the very tree—— "

"Oh, don't!" said Fanny suddenly, putting her hands up to her ears, and letting the reins drop.

Visions of all that she had said that day coursed through her brain, and now nothing that she could ever say would mend it. No apology, no saying she did not mean it, would do ; the very memory of what she had said seemed as though she had meant it all. But now she saw it all. This was Julius's revenge at last. He did not care for her at all ; he had been mocking her all the time, and now he was going to be revenged for her foolish insulting words.

"Why 'oh, don't!'" asked he. "It was a red-letter day in my calendar. Don't you remember my telling you so afterwards ? Don't you remember my saying it was a lucky day for me, or at

—  
“ You do, Lady Fanny, you do ! ”

Then he paused, studying her downcast face.

“ Won’t you give me my answer to-day ? I brought you here for that.”

How was she to say it ? Was she really wanted to say it ? Why did he make long pauses and look at her ? How inexpressibly difficult it was to say it. After all, it could not be true. He could not really care for her.

“ It is not true ! ” said she wildly. “ You are not thinking. You are dreaming ! ”

“ Then it is the sweetest dream I ever dreamed, and I never want to wake.”

In that moment, past doubts, past

dreams, past vexations, future troubles, and future difficulties were all forgotten ; only Julius stood there.

“Fanny, my fairy queen, can you love me ?—can you trust me ? ”

Then the stubborn head that had been bent so long was raised, and her hand found its way to his.

“It is true, then ? ” asked she, with wide-open eyes. “There are some things in life that seem too good to be true.”

“Are you not afraid ? ” said he suddenly, taking a step back, as though he would even yet sacrifice himself. “For the whole of life ! . . . think ! And think, too, of the opposition you may meet with —for I am nothing, nobody. Are you not afraid ? ”

He looked so staunch, so strong, so true, standing there, smiling at her, testing her thus.

now. Here was her haven.

“ My whole life is yours,” said he presently. “ You are the star I have sought the whole winter long. Sometimes, on some of these cold, cheerless days, I have thought you were a very will-o’-the-wisp—that you would never stop to listen, and then; sometimes, you smiled, and then I thought you were true and constant as any star. Sometimes, again, I thought I was dreaming, that I was mad, that you could never stoop to me.”

“ You did not know, then ? ”

“ How should I know ? It seemed mad presumption in me. Even now what will the others say ? ”

“I do not care.”

Then she laughed for very gladness.

“Are you happy, too ? ” asked she.

And then, suddenly grave, she jumped from off Snail’s back, and came to him, looking up in his face.

“Just so for a minute. This is best. Now we are equal. Now tell me, are you happy ? ”

There was a murmured answer that brought swift rushes of colour over her face.

“To think that to-day, to-day of all days, this should have come,” said she, laughing blithely.

“Why to-day ?

“This morning I thought I was the most miserable of God’s creatures. This evening I am His happiest.”

“Why were you so miserable ? ”

part in her doubts and fears. She told him all about Lord Swansea, about her father's troubles, her mother's anger, and then, suddenly, so talking, her thoughts reverted, all of a sudden, to that which happiness had chased away.

"And was it true what he said ? Have you lent Dalton money ? "

He could tell no story.

"Yes."

"Why ? "

"He wanted some, and he is your brother."

Unanswerable argument.

She stood looking at him, trying to read his face, while from her own all the gladness died away. Back surged a thousand

miserable thoughts and fears on her brain ; she was so poor—he was so rich. He would think she chose him for his money, or for gratitude because he had helped Dalton. She could not marry him.

“ It is dreadful,” said she.

“ What ? ” exclaimed he ; “ are you so proud that you cannot even let your brother accept a trifling loan from me, or that you cannot accept me because he has accepted it ? ”

“ It alters the whole thing,” said she.

He stared at her.

“ I mean money is such a dreadful thing to have to do with, and then, how you must despise us ! I hoped, I thought—I had a sort of idea once, in case you never liked me, that you should at least always be able to look up to me—to us ; that my life, at least, should stand out fair,

and clean, and untarnished; that at least you should never be able to find a reason why you could not like me——”

“ I see; a beautifully cold sort of respect you were chalking out for me. But since I saw so soon and so surely where was the fittest thing on the earth to like, why tease yourself in rearing a celestial sort of edifice, so likely, alas! to frighten half poor humanity away. Come, smile again, and forgive me for helping Dalton.”

“ Then I am so poor, and you are so rich.”

“ I thought we settled all that was humbug. Come now, you are not true to yourself.”

“ And i      I say—— ”

“ That      worry me for my mor  
Do you care      don't. I am gla  
the money      es us happy

we settled one evening, you know, that if one only loved somebody truly, whether he were rich or whether he were poor, it did not make any matter. You said you liked me ? ”

How many times did he want to hear it ?

Was Fanny to throw all her pride, all her scruples away once and for all, just for the sake of that *ignis fatuus*, happiness, that seemed hovering between them, and waiting for the sound of her voice.

“ Better than any one else in the wide world.”

“ When did you like me first ? ” asked he, by-and-by.

“ I don’t know. I hated you first one day out hunting when you cut me and turned to shake hands with a farmer.

When did you take it into your head to like me ? ”

“ A little the first day I saw you ; very much once when I saw you by chance in the Ivy Cottage garden ; more, ever since. And now, tell me something : Have you ever liked any one else ? ”

Lady Fanny walked away a step or two.

“ That is a bore.”

“ Then, never mind.”

“ I mean, it is just bringing up a cloud on this otherwise bright afternoon.”

“ Then, never mind.”

“ Oh yes ; of course I must tell you.”

“ Only, you evidently don’t care much about him now, if he is such a bore.”

Lady Fanny stood opposite to him.

“ He was quite beautiful ; tall, handsome, cheery. Tell me, have you ever

read Miss Broughton's 'Cometh up as a Flower?'"

"Yes."

"Because he was my King Olaf, only infinitely nicer and handsomer; and not at all vulgar."

"Oh."

"He wrote all crooked, and never spelt anything straight. That was why I liked him. Then he was full of mischief, always saying ridiculous things, and such blue eyes."

"Did you like him long?"

"Ages! He was an Irishman;—a regular bit of sunshine."

"And he cared for you very much?"

"Well, you know, I don't believe now that he cared a straw for me, but I amused him, and he thought he did when I was there."

“ Oh no, poor fellow, not at all. He is more like the memory of sorrow coming over one now, or like a sad shadow suddenly thrown across a bright path. But he couldn’t help going to the bad, he was so weak, and too bright and merry a being for this unkind hard world. There are some such people, not awake to the wickedness and cruelty of the world till they are well in the net.”

“ And you like him now? ”

“ Oh no, of course I don’t. It was a mistake altogether on my part. They think at home that I care for him still. You have no notion how much pity they have wasted on me over that mistake of mine ; and I pull a long face always when his name is mentioned, but more from habit than anything else.”

"I am glad that is over."

"And you, Julius? Did you ever make a mistake, too?"

It was the first time she had called him by his name.

"Thank you for that. I was in love at Oxford——"

"Oh, of course."

"With an innkeeper's daughter!——"

"That's odd. Dalton was in love, too, with an innkeeper's daughter. . . . I suppose it always is that, or else with the daughter or the sister of the man who keeps the boats."

Julius laughed.

The sun was going down behind a great bank of cloud. It tinged the edges with gold, and a broad streak of red stretched across the sky.

"I must go," said she.

“That would be dreadful.”

How many lovers' partings and lovers' vows were there said before the last was really uttered? The near future to them both looked like the great bank of cloud that was gathered in the west.

“Only there is the bright underlining!” said Fanny, with her trustful smile.

Julius walked along beside the pony into Kirkcudbright. At length they stood by the old stump where they had first met.

“I have my way!” said he triumphantly. “This was my dream, to get you here with me to-day. Oh, will-o'-the-wisp, don't go ! ”

“I must go, Julius,” said she gravely.

"But I will come again. You trust me now, surely?"

"May I come to Kirkcudbright to-morrow?"

"No. Let me see them first. Meet me here after to-morrow, will you?"

Of course he would trust her, but of course he could not wait. There were remonstrances, suggestions, contradictions, all in vain. Fanny must tell the others at her own time, in her own way.

"I feel like Satan," said he, with sudden compunction, as he thought of what she would probably have to contend against for his sake; "I feel like Satan, having stolen my way into your Eden, and having tempted you to rebel."

The calm moonlight was shining down upon them and on the old stump. Even Snail was restive; he did not care a straw

together over life's ocean; and when Snail heard Julius kiss Fanny's hand as she chucked at his rein, why, he had heard him do it once before, and it seemed to him a work of supererogation, so he set off at a quick trot that soon carried Fanny out of sight.

Julius waited till every sound of his hoofs had ceased, and then he struck off across the park towards the Priory.





## CHAPTER XII.

Now, Lord Dalton had been kinder to Fanny than any other member of her family in these last days of tribulation ; he had brought her that second cup of tea in the morning, and when her indigation at the injustice with which she was being treated, had nearly vented itself in hasty and intemperate words, his timely smile had administered a gentle and considerate rebuke.

When they were assembled together in the drawing-room at Kirkcudbright before

the news of her engagement to Julius, felt herself instinctively drawn towards Dalton. He had sinned much, certainly, in that matter of the money, but therefore, perhaps, he would all the more readily help her and Julius. Those who need, or who have needed, forgiveness for themselves, extend it readily to others.

Fanny felt herself in quite a different position now towards the rest of the family from that which she had held in the morning. She was no longer to be cowed down by black looks and silence, or to be sat upon by curt sayings and sharp innuendoes. She now felt herself very important. She had a battle to fight, doubtless, but she had a future and a

destiny before her; she had tangible duties, too, to perform, for somebody cared for her, and to him she was bound. What mattered it to her in fact what he was, or who he was! He was true to her, solely, irrevocably, and she owed him something. At present she owed him swift acknowledgment. The sooner she explained her intentions to her family the better she was serving him, by shortening his suspense, and by procuring him a speedy welcome from her relations.

Unfortunately, considering what an important communication Fanny had to impart, these relations were very tiresome this evening. Lady Kirkcudbright was reading, Katie's and Alice's heads were together over their work—they were wondering how their mother expected them to behave this evening towards the

it, his back turned to them all.

Meanwhile, Fanny was bursting with the sense of her own importance. She had only been indoors a few minutes, and had changed her dress in the utmost haste. Dalton was not down.

Then dinner was announced, and Fanny knew she could not impart her information before the servants.

As they crossed the hall to go into the dining-room, Fanny slipped between her sisters, and holding the arm of each for a second, blurted out her piece of news in their ears.

“I am engaged to be married to Julius Hawkshaw.”

“What!—your pill-man?” exclaimed Katie, horror-struck.

" Oh, Fan, how could you ? " said Alice.

Then, supreme awe at the magnitude of the offence held them silent, and during half dinner they could not take their spell-bound eyes off their sister's face, as they wondered how such a guilty criminal could sit there so calm and so unmoved, amongst them.

Lady Kirkcudbright, unconscious of the bright blaze of happiness that had suddenly illuminated poor little Fanny's heart, still intended to crush her, to make her feel how wicked she had been in disregarding the good things which the gods had tried to push into her hands, in the form of Lord Swansea, and, if possible, still to reduce her to subservience. Now there was a sort of impertinent smile on her daughter's face this evening, which looked ugly to Lady Kirkcudbright.

What a very odd question. A flood of colour rushed over Fanny's face. It was curious how much she had done with herself that afternoon, but she could not explain fully just then.

"I went out on Snail."

"I don't like your going by yourself, Fanny. I meant to tell you so before," said her mother.

"I wish you had spoken sooner, mother. Now, I'm afraid——"

"What?" asked Lady Kirkcudbright sharply.

Then Fanny did not answer. She was equal to saying anything, but she was preaching discretion to herself just then.

"You did not see anybody, I sup-

pose ? ” asked Dick, willing to shield her.

“ You never do see anybody,” said Dalton.

“ Oh yes, I did. I went to see Mr. Lawley.”

“ Did you ? ” said her mother, with asperity.

“ He is so ill, mamma.”

“ Poor Bob,” said Lord Kirkcudbright, “ I much fear——”

“ Don’t talk of it,” said Fanny quickly ; “ it is enough to make me give up hunting for ever. Sometimes I wish I had never got on a horse.”

“ The fall may have hurt him, Fan, as much as the touch from Go-lightly’s hoof.”

“ He is no chicken to get a fall at all,” said Dalton.

kindest, I'm sure."

"I meant nothing disrespectful. But is he really so bad?"

"He looks so ill—so thin and pale, but as cheery as ever."

"Did you stay long?"

"Oh yes, I sat with him some time."

"You are curious in your choice of friends, Fanny. You talked of hunting all the time, I suppose—hounds, and fences, and scent, and this country, and that country——"

"No, mother, no. He can adapt his conversation as well as his sympathy."

"And after that, Fanny?" asked Dalton.

"I came round by the village."

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“ And you did not see anybody else I suppose ? ”

“ Yes, I saw Mr. Hawkshaw.”

“ Did you, Fanny ? ”

“ Did you speak to him ? I suppose not.”

Fanny felt her sisters’ eyes fixed upon her with intense excitement.

“ Oh yes, I spoke to him for a long while.”

“ What did he say ? ” asked Dalton, thinking, perhaps, they had talked over his loan.

Catching sight of the expression on his face, Fanny understood that neither her father nor mother knew anything of that loan—another reason why Dalton should befriend her. She would keep his secret in return.

“ I will tell you all by-and-by,” said she, with a sudden smile.

“ Tell us now,” said her father anxiously.

“ No, papa.”

The remainder of the repast was silent enough.

Afterwards, when the three girls were alone, Lady Kirkcudbright absenting herself purposely, Katie and Alice besieged Fanny with questions.

“ Do you really mean to do it, Fanny ? Will you marry him ? ”

“ Certainly, I will.”

“ I don’t believe it, Katie,” said Alice. “ I think it’s only to get out of old Swansea. It can’t really be true.”

“ How did he do it, Fan ? What did he say ? ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Didn’t you think him awfully impertinent ? ”

“No.”

“Why, you don’t care about him, do you?”

“Yes.”

“You haven’t long?”

“Yes, I have. Ever so long.”

“He is very handsome, Katie,” said Alice.

“Yes. But Fanny herself put me against him, because she said he was a pill-man. I never looked at him.”

“Then you see we don’t hunt,” said Alice.

“I believe he is a regular slow-coach in the hunting field,” said Katie.

“Yes, he is,” said Fanny gravely.

“I shall take to hunting myself next winter,” said Katie.

“Is it nice to be engaged, Fan?” asked Alice.

“I don’t know yet ! ” sighed Fanny.

“Fancy, your doing it just to-day, Fanny, when you are already in such awful disgrace ! ”

“It will be rather fun though to have her at the Priory, Katie ; we can go over to lunch there.”

“I am sure I shan’t, if those horrid people are there. Just think, Alice, they eat peas with their knives, and leave out all their h’s.”

“But I’m sure that old woman will give us lots of goodies and presents. No end of presents ! ”

“I dare say she will ; and all paid for, too ! ” said Fanny.

“I don’t so much care about that,” said Katie, who was rather hazy about the payment so long as she got the presents. “But Fanny, it’s a dreadful

come down. What will the Castletrees say?"

"They would have married him themselves, I know, in a minute, though they did not care a straw about him."

"Of course not; it was the money. Mamma said so. And of course we must all say it is that, too. That's the only excuse."

"Excuse—eh? It has nothing to do with it. I'd marry him just as much if he hadn't a penny, if he asked me."

"Oh, but he wouldn't be such a fool as that. After all, exchange is no robbery—he knows that."

"I don't think he thinks about it like that at all. He likes me; it would be just the same if—if—I was quite nobody, so long as I'm myself."

"My goodness! Why, Fanny, I thought

money: we must have some excuse, if you're determined, just to save appearances. It is too disgusting that you, the eldest, should be in love with a pill-man."

"We must ask mamma about it."

"Katie, if you call him a pill-man again, I'll never speak another word to you; that was only an old joke of mine. And, Alice, don't you say a word about it till the others come in. I'm not going to face mamma on the subject till I have papa and the boys here to keep her to reason."

Just then the door opened and they all came in.

"If anything should happen to him, I don't know who would take the hounds." said Dick.

"It wants a man with money," said Dalton.

"Then don't entertain the idea in your head, Dalton," said his father.

Then Lady Kirkcudbright came in.

"Will you have a game at go-bang, Alice?"

So Alice fetched the board and sat down opposite to her mother.

The others placed themselves round the fire, and for some minutes, while they were finding the books or newspapers they wanted, Fanny was biding her time.

If circumstances had been different, she would have told one of them confidentially first, and so have won a friend, but just now she was too proud, and too manifestly in disgrace, to sue to any one of them for assistance.

wondering how she would begin. These glances irritated Fanny considerably. She felt bound to obey and satisfy them at once.

"I have something to tell you all," said Fanny suddenly, after a long silence, in a clear antagonistic tone of voice.

Lady Kirkcudbright and Alice ceased their game of go-bang, looking up at Fanny astonished ; Lord Kirkcudbright put down his newspaper, Dick gave vent to a prolonged whistle of wonder, and Dalton flushed uneasily, for he thought his loan of £500 from Julius was now going to be exposed to the family circle.

Fanny had looked round on them with a cold, half-offended sort of gaze ; now, all at once, her heart sank, and all power

of speech seemed gone. She suddenly remembered, as she met her father's eye, that it was hardly right for her to say she was going to do this or that ; that, in fact, she must say it was subject to her father's approval. For this novel idea she had been quite unprepared, and now no words were forthcoming.

" Well," said Lady Kirkcudbright.

" Never mind, Fan!" said Dalton kindly, " perhaps you did not mean it."

" Oh, yes—I did—I do mean it. It isn't that."

" Better say it," said Lord Kirkcudbright.

" This afternoon I went out on Snail," said she presently, very solemnly, and jerking out her words with effort, " and as I was coming home I met Mr. Hawkshaw."

“ And, after talking awhile—— ”

“ You should not have stopped,” said her mother, in measured accents, “unless, indeed, you met by arrangement.”

Lord Kirkcudbright started with visible disgust, and Fanny flushed angrily.

“ Hush, Caroline, my dear ! ” said Lord Kirkcudbright.

“ I met him by accident. I did not think it was necessary to explain that. But the long and short of it is, that he asked me to marry him, and that I said ‘ Yes.’ ”

She was angry and frightened, and, at the same time, very determined. She could not now, before them all, go into the question of liking, of how she liked

him, or of how passionately he had said he liked her ; she could say nothing of all that to these cold, slightly astonished, unimpassioned set of faces surrounding her. Nor could she stoop to imply that she had said her "Yes" subject to their approval, for she had done nothing of the sort. She had given Julius to understand that she was his by simple right of preference, and by that alone she meant to stand. Nor to them would she give any other reason for her decision, except the slightly cold, though strictly honourable and unanswerable one, that, having given her word, she must, as far as it might be possible to her, abide by it.

"I don't understand you, Fanny ?"  
said her mother.

"Don't you, mother ?"

a strange mixture of annoyance, amusement, and admiration on his face.

“ You’ll never carry it through, Fan ! ”

“ Have you any objection, papa ? ”

“ Yes, child, the greatest. You are doing this because you are angry about Swansea, and you don’t know what you are doing.”

“ Ah ! not that,” said she, going up to him and putting her hand on his arm, touched with sudden tenderness at seeing that, after all, he cared for her happiness more than anything else ; “ not that—you mistake. I am not so foolish that I should do anything of this sort in that way : I love him.”

She had not meant to say it. The

words slipped out without consideration. She looked all the sweeter and all the truer for them when they were said, albeit she felt confused beyond expression, and dared not look anywhere but in the fire for minutes afterwards.

“Impossible, Fanny!” said her mother harshly.

“You’d better think over it a little, Fan,” said Dick.

“Don’t you grumble, Dick! There’d be lots of horses for you to ride at the Priory.”

“This is too serious, Fan, to laugh over,” said Lord Kirkcudbright.

“It cannot be thought of,” said Lady Kirkcudbright. “I am sure no daughter of mine could really contemplate it.”

“He’s very unobjectionable, mother,” said Dalton.

now, from that sort of people. I shall take to a wheelbarrow," said Lady Kirkcudbright.

"After all," said Fanny angrily, "what's the difference? You want me to marry that dreadful old Lord Swansea just because he is rich and his name is ever so old—even older than himself—and I hate him; and now, when I want you to let me marry another who is ever so rich, you say no. I don't hate him—I suppose that is why; and then, too, he is older than his name in your estimation, perhaps; for it has, in fact, only been heard by ears polite for a year or so."

"Don't get angry, Fan."

"But you make me quite sick. You

seem to think the individual is nothing ; that place and possession is everything.”

“ My dear child, you don’t think. You will lose your ‘place,’ as you call it, entirely, if you marry this young man. You will know no one, and be no one, in London ; you will have no friends, such as you will care to have as friends, with such a connection as that. Who is to come near you with that old man and woman always turning up ? ”

“ Perhaps Fanny can judiciously cool them off ? ” suggested Dalton.

“ I can’t help them ; but as for friends, mamma, if people don’t care for me for myself, then I don’t care for them at all.”

“ It is much pleasanter to have a popular husband. That young man will never be popular.”

“ I don’t see why he shouldn’t. I

wish you would not call him the ‘young man ! ’ ”

They all smiled.

“ You won’t expect me to call upon you, for instance ? ” said her mother, ironically.

“ Certainly not, mamma. I hope you will not so endanger your position in society as to do it.”

“ I mean in London. And I am afraid the friends I have already introduced you to will drop you. I cannot drag you all through that again, as Lady Fanny Hawkshaw ! ”

“ How funny it sounds ! ” said Katie.

“ I don’t see how anybody *is* to know you,” said Lady Kirkcudbright again.

“ Come, mother, come ; he is a most unobjectionable young fellow,” said Dalton.

“I don’t mean to go to London,” said Fanny, who was getting rather frightened.

“Oh, you have settled that already ! It is much the wisest plan. I could not let the girls go with you much. Such a connection will be a sad drawback for them. You had better be lost.”

“I will be lost—to you all !” said Fanny with bitter impetuosity. “On that understanding, so be it. It will be best so.”

Then she gathered her work together and departed. It was impossible to stand there facing them any longer : her mother had effectually silenced her father and brothers. Fanny did not feel able to stand up there doing sacrifice to her love by wrangling over it so bitterly. She felt tired and disappointed and sick at heart.

sharply, when the door had closed on Fanny. "You always leave me to do everything."

"I was too much taken aback to say anything," said Dick.

"Taken aback! I have foreseen this all the winter."

"Then why, for Heaven's sake, didn't you stop it, Caroline?"

"Stop it! how could I? not being sure, and fearing to bring it on by taking absurd precautions. And then, you have all been so ridiculous about this man—he has always been in one of your mouths, either his farm was better managed than anybody else's, or this improvement was wonderful, or that generosity was remarkable——"

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"I wish he had never come here," said Alice.

"Then Dalton has made such a fuss with him, having him to dinner in London, and dining there, and all sorts of things."

"I thought you liked it, mother?"

"I never asked you to put it into his head that he could marry Fanny."

"And I am sure I never did do that. But, after all, mother, it is the way of the age. Class distinctions are annulled more and more every day."

"You don't mean to say that sort of man could ever be our equal?"

"I only mean to say that I shouldn't wonder if in a few years we don't all have to knock under to that sort of man."

"Oh, then you approve, you uphold her?"

all, Fanny won't want for anything, and it may be the means, who knows, of saving us all from the poor-house some day."

"It is different for men; you cannot understand the feeling. You worship comfort, and I believe so long as you can get the things that money buys, you will sacrifice everything else in the world."

Dalton was silent.

It was not true as far as he was concerned, but what is a man to do? Antony was laughed at for sacrificing all, even for Cleopatra; and few men find Cleopatras in the vulgar, commonplace, conventional lives of these later days.

"Is moneyocracy quite to swamp aris-

tocracy nowadays?" exclaimed Lady Kirkcudbright angrily. "True, a Florentine merchant's daughter gave a monarch to France, and Jews hold high places in our London society. But surely, when we let this worship of the golden calf permeate all through our society, and find its way into our intimate thoughts and lives, it must be wrong; such meanness cannot end in good."

"You must remember that Fanny does not worship the golden calf, Caroline; I don't suppose she thinks of it."

"There is comfort in that," said Dick, sarcastically.

"But I want to keep the man down—the class down."

"Oh, with all my heart, if you can."

"That my daughter should go—thus——"

alone—

“I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it! Just Fanny, the flower of the flock, the ewe lamb! She might have married anybody, if we had had more money, and could have taken her out better.”

Lord Kirkcudbright winced. Why had he been such a fool? Why had he nearly always backed the losing horse? Why had he been so reckless, so selfish? It was all his fault that now his proud wife had to lower her head and bite the dust.





## CHAPTER XIII.

Now Julius had said nothing that evening at the Priory about his engagement to Lady Fanny. It was not that he was afraid, but he preferred the independence that silence gave him, and, moreover, he was not sure that his parents would be so content with an attitude of quiet waiting, as he had made up his mind to hold for the present himself.

Next morning, therefore, when he was out in the park, some way from the house, on seeing the diminutive pony-carriage

somewhat uneasy as to what reception the occupants might receive in his absence. He hastened his steps. What move was this from the hostile camp? Did the enemy remonstrate angrily against the capture he had made? He laughed gaily, throwing such thoughts to the winds. Fanny was so true, they might do their worst.

Lady Kirkcudbright was alone.

She desired to see Mrs. Hawkshaw.

That estimable woman was upstairs, having a new cap tried on, when the servant told her of Lady Kirkcudbright's arrival. The blood rushed to her face.

"Well, I'll go, new cap and hall. Better than keeping her waiting; and I do think it's becoming!"

"Good morning, Mrs. Hawkshaw," said Lady Kirkcudbright, speaking in short, sharp, cutting tones, as she rose suddenly from contemplating jealously some of the many beautiful objects Julius had collected at the Priory since she had seen it. "I am afraid that I have been a long time returning your call."

"You have so many calls upon your ladyship, I am sure," said Mrs. Hawkshaw, trying to be facetious, and wondering why she had come now.

"I wanted to see you about this rather unfortunate affair between our children."

Now this very moderate speech cost Lady Kirkcudbright untold agony, but she wanted to make a favourable impression, so as to conduct matters amicably and without a fuss.

Mrs. Hawkshaw's heart jumped into

entirely ; she thought she was referring to Moll and Lord Dalton.

"I was almost afraid you would not like it. I told my Moll so. But—there, young people will be young people ! "

"Moll !" breathed Lady Kirkcudbright just above a whisper.

"You see, he is handsome and very taking, and my gal has not been out so much. She's lost her heart, I tell her, completely."

Then Lady Kirkcudbright began to see it, and she smiled kindly.

Strange !—these people had had the same idea in their heads that she had entertained, although she had not breathed a word on the subject to any one save the duchess.

“ What can we do, my lady, eh ? Moll will have money. Doesn’t Lord Dalton know that ? Couldn’t we—— ”

Then she saw she was going too far, and she wished she had bitten her tongue out sooner than that it should have framed the words.

“ It isn’t that, Mrs. Hawkshaw. You mistake. I didn’t know . . . . about Dalton. It is my eldest daughter and your son about whom I came to speak.”

“ Oh, Lady Kirkcudbright, you never mean that, do you ? ”

It was easy to trace the conflicting thoughts that chased each other through Mrs. Hawkshaw’s mind. First, there was joy for her boy—unspeakable joy, that he should have what he wanted.

“ Dear Ju !—I always thought he cared for her, but I never dared say so. Ju is so proud ! ”

Lady Fanny was so poor, and men who have made their money——

“Whatever will Peter do? Men who have made their money are quite foolish in liking their sons to marry money. Whatever will Peter say?”

“He will not like it?” asked Lady Kirkcudbright, inwardly insulted, but catching at the straw.

Hadn’t Peter said, only yesterday, that those Kirkcudbrights were a nasty, ill-bred, stuck-up lot? Mrs. Hawkshaw couldn’t say truly that she thought he would like it. How could she soothe Lady Kirkcudbright?

“I don’t much think he will. But—he’ll come round, he’ll come round!”

“Neither do I like it, Mrs. Hawkshaw.

You may tell your husband so from me.  
It must be stopped!"

Stopped? Mrs. Hawkshaw remembered Fanny that night sheltering from the storm, remembered her standing by the statue, and Julius looking at her—remembered, too, her own young days, years and years ago—why should it be stopped?

"Do they call themselves engaged,  
Lady Kirkcudbright?"

"They do."

"Then I don't think we can alter it, after all. Ah, yes, I know they are happy if they have gone so far, I know that they love each other: I know it all. She is a sweet little lady—and if she has chosen my Ju—no, Lady Kirkcudbright, you and Peter may say what you like—but I was young once myself, and few enough of us marry the man of our heart—I won't

“They are not equal.”

“They think themselves so, I dessay, if they’re in love. And as for equals, why, what is that? My Ju’s a gentleman in heart and soul, and has not been to Oxford and everywhere for nothing.”

“Oh no, I don’t mean that!”

“Do you want me and Peter and Moll to turn out of this? Of course we will—I won’t stand half the breadth of a second in the way of my Ju’s happiness.”

Just for a moment some sense of the wide difference between them crossed Lady Kirkcudbright’s brain; there was Mrs. Hawkshaw ready to give up comfort—the position she had gained in the county—everything, for the happiness of these two young people; and there was



she herself whining over her miserable empty disappointment, and bitter because a selfish scheme or two of her own was failing, and never thinking much about any one's happiness. Some idea of this crossed her brain, but she did not understand the thought then, nor could she have put it into words if she had tried, only she felt there was a difference between them, and for a moment or two she kept silent.

Then Mr. Hawkshaw came in.

He had heard beforehand who was in the drawing-room, and he thought, like his wife, that Lady Kirkcudbright had come to talk about Moll and Lord Dalton. He was pleased on the whole; it was a compliment to him that his daughter should have a chance of becoming a marchioness, but still he was sorry Lord

a man, and, then, men are so much easier to manage than women. Still, he felt in great spirits, and he determined to be very bland with her ladyship.

“We were talking about marrying and giving in marriage, Mr. Hawkshaw,” said Lady Kirkcudbright, when he had made his bow, and she had greeted him becomingly.

“Women generally do, my lady, when they get together gossiping. I’ve known ‘em go on by the hour, and think of nothing else.”

“Hush, Peter, now.”

“But it’s a serious thing, this marrying ! Now, there’s my wife there, a real good soul in her way, but I no sooner hopen my mouth than her wish is to shut it.”

“Oh, Peter.”

“Well, my lady. I’m very glad you know, for Moll, if she’s to have the man of her heart—— I didn’t like it at first, and I’ve talked against it till my throat was dry, but—if it’s come to this, and you’re agreeable——”

“Hush, Peter.”

“Now, my dear, that’s just what I won’t do.”

“But, you’re all wrong. It’s Ju!”

“What?”

“It’s Ju, I tell you.”

Then Mrs. Hawkshaw gave her lord a hasty nudge in the side, which caused Lady Kirkcudbright to smile.

“It is your son, Mr. Hawkshaw, who has taken it into his head to fall in love with my daughter Fanny.”

“The rascal!—he has, has he?”

altogether," and Mr. Hawkshaw's blandness ceased altogether. "I'm an honest man, your ladyship, and I honestly tell you that I am not sure that I like it."

Lady Kirkcudbright drew herself up.

" You don't, don't you ? "

It was very bitter, and Lady Kirkcudbright looked as if she would like to crush him, if she could.

" Moll's a different thing. Moll would make a grand marchioness ! "

" Yes, Peter, but Moll's neither here nor there, now."

" I'm sorry for it. Ju marry Lady Fanny ! Ju must be mad ! "

" Why, Mr. Hawkshaw ? " asked Lady Kirkcudbright. She had expected them to jump at the alliance.

“She hasn’t a penny, I suppose, my lady—not a penny.”

“Oh, Peter, now hush! Ju’s got plenty, I’m sure, for both. Surely our boy can choose where he likes, and she’s a sweet little lady; you said so yourself.”

“I don’t like it, Mr. Hawkshaw, any more than you do. I came to you to ask you to help me to prevent it.”

“You don’t like it, my lady. Why don’t you like it, now?”

“I hoped for something else for Fanny; I had a little plan of my own.”

“Your ladyship wants rank?”

“I should have liked something a little more suitable, a little more equal.”

“Ju has no rank, certainly. I began life as an errand boy in a merchant’s house, and now I’m a merchant myself.

you're right, my lady, in wanting a swell. They're all precious paupers nowadays, and mostly going to the dogs, one way or other ! Better give the people a hoist up, and get a little purer blood mixed with theirs."

"Purer blood ? "

"Well, I mean white hands don't always mean clean ones, and Norman blood don't always mean good blood. As for names and titles nowadays, why, peers seem to me to be as thick as peas, all over the place."

"There is your son, passing the window, ask him to come in to me."

"I say, Ju," called Mr. Hawkshaw, "come here ! What's this you've been up to ? What are we to do with the grand

young lady you think of bringing into the family ? ”

“ Lady Fanny is not grand, father.”

“ Her friends won’t be our friends, or ours, hers. What is she to do ? How is she to get on with your mother and me ? I doubt if she speaks to Moll even much.”

“ You do not know her yet, father.” Then he went and stood before Lady Kirkcudbright. “ Are you very angry with me, Lady Kirkcudbright ? ”

“ You have not treated us fairly, Mr. Hawkshaw. You should have come to Lord Kirkcudbright, or to me.”

“ I had no time ; I did not know ; it came so suddenly at the end. I had no sort of hope till yesterday, and then—— ”

“ Yes, then suddenly it became too late ! ”

“ I suppose not, father.”

“ She says you are not equals. I should have thought——Well!—well! I won’t say anything hard. I only mean it seems to me I’ve been working hard all my life, and now I’m to fill your pockets with the proceeds of that, and you’re to spend it.”

“ You forget, father, I don’t expect any more. You’ve bought this place for me, and all that, and, whether I have any more or not, is my own look-out. If all I have is enough for Lady Fanny, then I am content.”

“ Bravely spoken, Ju,” said his mother.

“ As for being equals, Ju, I am not sure that I understand the term. If Ju were a poor savage, my lady, and dared

to lift up his heyes to your daughter, mighty soon your nose would go hup in the air, and you'd be quite right. But Ju is not a savage; he has had a very fine education——”

“It isn't that!” said Lady Kirkcudbright in a slightly subdued voice.

“Lor' bless you! We were all savages once!”

“It is birth Lady Kirkcudbright means, father.”

“Well, I used to worship titles myself, but not now; I'm a sight wiser now. Lor' bless you, I thinks nothing of them. They open a man a way in the crowd, and sound sweet maybe for a minute, but when you hear now how they're gained, or when you see the man's life that wears them, why then, I say, he'd be ever so much better without them,

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“ Most titles have been given for great deeds,” said Lady Kirkcudbright.

“ And as many more for dirty ones ! ”

“ Come, come, Peter, that’s too strong now ! ”

“ Well, I am getting an old man now, and I’ve come to looking at a man’s life by the work he has done in it. If you’d had ‘alf or a quarter as ‘ard a life as I’ve had, my lady, you’d see, too, how it teaches a man, and he judges of the risings and fallings according. Work just makes a man’s life, and one can judge a man pretty accurately by it; seen so, titles and ornaments don’t go for much ! ”

“ Well, Mr. Hawkshaw,” said Lady Kirkcudbright, rising and putting out her

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hand to Julius, "I must be going home now. Think it over, will you? I think you will find that you and Fanny have made a mistake. It would make me inexpressibly happy if I might tell her from you that you think perhaps it was rather a hasty . . . promise."

"I can say nothing of that sort. I am hers for ever, and she knows it."

"Lor', Ju! there's lover's language. Do you mean it, my boy?"

"Yes, father."

"And if she sets down your poor old father and mother with her grand ways, what will you do then?"

"She won't do that, father."

"Of course, it's a great compliment to us, Ju; and a great thing for you here in the county to have a grand wife with a handle to her name!"

“ Don’t she, now? well, then, I honour her for it! And look ’ere, my lady, I did mean to stand by you and say, ‘No, not if I knows it!’ but now Ju seems so set on it that I am going to stand by ’im and the young lady, and will drink their healths with all the pleasure in life on their wedding-day. My Ju is quite right, that he is; he don’t want money, and I’ve made enough to make him happy, I ’ope!”

“ That’s spoken like yourself, Peter! Tell her from us, my lady, how glad we are, and that we’ll be proud to see her here as soon as ever she can come.”

This enthusiasm seemed inexpressibly vulgar to Lady Kirkcudbright. She took her leave with mournful reticence, and drove home in no amiable mood.

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She had done the family no good at all, and she had eaten more dust than ever.

It was, in fact, only for Julius's sake that they had expressed themselves agreeable to the alliance.



## CHAPTER XIV.

MEANWHILE Fanny seemed to be doing nothing; she seemed inert—passive. Lady Kirkcudbright noticed that all that day she gave no one her confidence, nor did she ask any one for assistance in her troubles. She had said nothing to her father even. Lady Kirkcudbright was not aware of a little note dispatched by post to Bolton, which caused the duchess to laugh to herself when she got it next morning, and then made her run off to the duke.

“All my plans are altered for the day.

I am not going to do any thing you want. Order me the swiftest pair of horses in the stables, that I may go over to Kirkcudbright to luncheon."

"Why, what's the matter, Louie?"

"I tell you, it must have been all my Spelling Bee, now mustn't it?"

"I always said they were mischievous things."

"On the contrary, blessed and useful things. They were all wrong before, not speaking, quarrelling, and now they're all right, and engaged to be married."

"Who?—Fanny?"

"Yes, and that nice young man, Mr. Julius Hawkshaw."

"And, of course, you're delighted, because you think you did it."

"Duke, don't you think it's a very good thing?"

“It’s a come down, you know, in a way, and Caroline does not like it.”

“I don’t know that one can always choose exactly who one likes, and, after all, Fanny likes him, I suppose.”

“Yes, that’s why.”

“Oh, I see. Then, Louie, you had better go over and just make it all straight.”

The duchess walked half across the room, then turned back.

“And when you come to think how many more thousands of girls there are in England than there are boys, it’s a marvel to me how half of them marry at all.”

“Exactly, quite a marvel.”

In the duke’s estimation, his wife’s

cousins, the Kirkcudbrights, were fast running the road to ruin. This might save their credit a little; he really thought it a very good thing.

So when Lady Kirkcudbright was sitting with knitted brow in her boudoir about one o'clock, she heard a great deal of laughing and kissing going on in the next room, and then was inexpressibly relieved to distinguish the well-known tones of the duchess's voice.

"Oh, Louie, I am so glad you have come. I wanted to see you."

Closeted there, the two talked it over in all its bearings, and the more the duchess was in favour of Fanny's engagement the more was Lady Kirkcudbright irritated and unconvinced.

"Of course, you don't care. Fanny is not your daughter, and you think it is

"But, Caroline, how unjust you are. Fanny is my especial pet. I am only glad because I see how super-eminently happy she is."

"I shall go over and see the duke about it. He is the only sensible man in the family. He will see it in a proper light."

"Sensible, indeed, Caroline. Did you hear what he did the other day in one of his frequent fits of absence? He took up a candle to drink it instead of a glass of water that stood on the table, and burnt his throat most dreadfully."

"I am very sorry for that."

"Oh no, you will get no comfort out of him. Besides, if the child has set her heart on it, Caroline——"

“ Heart!—ridiculous! It is a fit of pique, that is all; or it is because he is young and good-looking, and Swansea’s not. But it is folly. We cannot be so disgraced.”

Dalton lounged in.

“ And she will not see the pitfall into which she is falling.”

“ Luncheon’s ready, mother.”

“ It is your duty, Dalton, to save her.”

“ My dear mother,” said he, languidly.

“ Oh yes, of course, it’s my dear mother. It always is.”

Poor Lady Kirkcudbright’s troubles were but just beginning. After luncheon the duchess went off with her husband, and neither of them was seen again for a long time; and, as if that were not enough—for she knew that Louie was talking nineteen to the dozen, and turning

carriage-drive, but Fanny on Snail, and Julius walking beside her. Lady Kirkcudbright put her head out of window to see what would happen next, and, to her astonishment, the duchess appeared on the steps, and Lord Kirkcudbright with her. More, they both welcomed Julius.

"I had told him he should see papa or have a final answer to-day, you know," Fanny was saying to the duchess, when Lady Kirkcudbright came down into the hall.

"Where is your father, Fanny?" asked she, for no one was to be seen but Fanny and the duchess.

"He has just taken Mr. Hawkshaw into his study," said the duchess. "He came over to see him."

Then there was a silence, as the three looked at each other.

“ Well, I suppose all we can do now is to wait and hear the result of the interview,” said the duchess at last, rather nervously.

She sat herself down in a low rocking-chair, as she spoke, and swayed herself to and fro.

Lady Kirkcudbright looked out of window to conceal her vexation.

Then, at last, she turned to Fanny.

“ Oh, Fanny, my child, do consider a little before you do this thing. Think what humiliation it is, what you’ll be, what you’ll come to. Even the county, which we have always looked down upon, will now look down upon you ! ”

“ I don’t care one row of pins for the county, mamma. It may look up or down as it likes.”

Look, I am so afraid of your doing this because of some mistaken notion that you must marry, and that you must get out of Kate's way."

"Not at all, mamma."

"Or that you must sacrifice yourself because he is rich and we are so poor."

"But I told you that she likes him for himself."

"I do really like him, mamma."

"Because one is not always—one cannot be always—so highly strung at one time as another. Exaltation of soul is intense at times, when one rejoices at work and tribulation and self-sacrifice, and one calls it joy."

"You frighten me, Caroline."

"One can look forward sometimes to a

life of self-abnegation and of quiet self-forgetfulness, to the extinction of all former dreams and hopes, and, in a mistaken dream of sincerity, one can say one has chosen the better part; and the very next day, one's soul quails within one at the gloomy out-look of that same better part, at the strength and patience, calm perseverance and self-denial, that will be necessary to go through it."

" You don't frighten me, mamma, for you are quite wrong in this case."

" Think of the snobs you will have to herd with; think of the dull, lonely, uncongenial sort of life you will have to lead."

" I don't see that at all, Caroline. She will probably have no end of fun; and I, at least, am three miles nearer the Priory than I am to Kirkcudbright,

"I have seen so much misery from mistaken marriages, Louie. One does not think at the time; and then the years roll on, bringing new troubles as they come. It is a death in life. No one should burden themselves thus more heavily than they can bear."

"Dear mother, believe me, I am sure I am doing right. I am not the same as you. I may be hopelessly in love with him, but he seems so true, so honest, there can be no mistake about it. I am sure no other life could make me so happy as this that he offers me."

Then the duchess stole away.

"Let us be reconciled, mother. And if, by-and-by, I should ever be sad or sorrowful through this, then you will at least

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have the comfort of knowing you did your best, but that your wilful child prayed you to let her have her way ; and if I'm, on the contrary, too happy, as I much fear I may be, why then you must forgive me for being so, although I differed from you in my choice."

Lady Kirkcudbright was not made of stone. She felt her child slipping away from her, but her hands had no power to hold her back.

"Poor little Fanny," said she, as she kissed her.

Then, presently, the door opened, and Lord Kirkcudbright called for Fanny.

"So it's all over, Louie," said Lady Kirkcudbright drearily, as the duchess reappeared.

"Yes, it is all over. They are now being blessed by your husband, looking

act, or shall we have a *réunion* over some tea in the drawing-room ? ”

“ Oh, your *réunion* by all means,” said Lady Kirkcudbright ; “ and I suppose I had better try to be civil.”

After that, these attempts had to be gone through frequently in the course of the week by Lady Kirkcudbright, for if the lovers did not meet daily over five o’clock tea, they met daily somewhere or other, and, as Dick said, “ No place seemed to hold them, for their ‘ billing and cooing ’ was going on everywhere.”

But then Dick did not like being left alone.

END OF VOL. II.

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